

OTHER WORLDS, OTHER WORDS:
ANA MARÍA MATUTE'S FANTASY TRILOGY

by

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Other Worlds, Other Words: Ana María Matute's Fantasy Trilogy

Thesis directed by Associate Professor Nina Molinaro

Ana María Matute (1926-) is unanimously considered one of the most important Spanish novelists writing after the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). She has received national attention in the form of numerous literary prizes including the Premio Nadal in 1960, for *Primera memoria*. Most recently Matute was honored with the Premio Cervantes in 2010, which makes her the third woman to be awarded the prize since its creation in 1976.

The publication of *La torre vigía* in 1971 sparked a literary turning point in Ana María Matute's career that would extend for more than thirty years. She left behind her well-known and highly acclaimed body of work which consisted of "social realist" novels and short stories in favor of novels written entirely in the mode of fantasy. *La torre vigía*, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* (1996) and *Aranmanoth* (2000), comprise a trilogy that explores various fantasy elements and takes place in other worlds in which fairies, princesses, ogres, elves, wizards and human beings coexist. In addition, these texts incorporate older literary forms such as the saga, the fairy tale, the epic poem and the legend into the genre of the novel.

The present study uses Northrop Frye's theory of modes in order place the novels along the spectrum from realism to fantasy according to the protagonist's relationship to other characters and to his/her surroundings. While the protagonists

aid us in determining one way in which the trilogy belongs to the mode of fantasy, Matute's creation of a pact with the reader is also an essential part of a successful fantasy novel. With each text, I analyze how Matute lures us into, and encourages us to remain in, these seemingly impossible worlds. Finally, I show how these other worlds act as a mirror for our own reality by revealing Matute's hallmark themes. In *La torre vigía*, she defends the weak and the exploited; in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* she criticizes political conflict and shows the consequences of greed; in *Aranmanoth* she questions the notion of honor and the duplicity of human nature.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Ana María Matute (1926-) is unanimously considered one of the most important Spanish novelists writing after the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). Much of her fiction is associated with themes connected to war, which helped to attract an international audience to Matute, and resulted in numerous translations of her work into every European language except Greek. She also has been embraced by the academic world as the subject of over one hundred twenty scholarly articles, ten books and numerous interviews.¹

Matute has also received national attention in the form of numerous literary prizes such as the Premio de la Crítica and the Premio Nacional de la Literatura in 1959 for *Los hijos muertos*. In 1960 she published *Primera memoria*, which earned her the prestigious Premio Nadal.² This book would become the first in her trilogy *Los mercaderes*, which includes the subsequent novels *Los soldados lloran de noche* (1964) and *La trampa* (1969). Some critics consider these three texts to be the most significant trilogy in postwar Spain.³ In 1965, Matute showed that her talent was not limited to one style when she won the Premio Nacional de Literatura Infantil for her children's book *El polizón del 'Ulises.'* She was the recipient of this award again in 1984 for her children's book *Sólo un pie descalzo*. In 1996, she became one of only three

women ever elected to the Real Academia Española as an honorary academic, joining Carmen Iglesias, a professor and historian, and biochemist Margarita Salas Falgueras. A decade later, Matute received yet another honor when she won the Premio Nacional de las Letras Españolas in 2007. Most recently Matute was honored with the Premio Cervantes in 2010, which makes her the third woman to be awarded the prize since its creation in 1976.

Continuing to explore her craft, Matute surprised many of the readers familiar with her previous fiction based in social realism when she published *La torre vigía* in 1971.⁴ This novel continues the vein of fantasy that she had begun in her children's stories, but it is meant for an adult audience. Although Matute was an extremely prolific writer prior to the publication of *La torre vigía*, twenty years passed before she published her next novels, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* (1996) and *Aranmanoth* (2000), which are also written in the mode of fantasy. Her most recent project, which she had hoped to finish by the end of spring 2008, is entitled *Paraíso inhabitado* and features a protagonist who intermingles reality and fantasy as she recalls her childhood.

It is clear that Matute has evolved as a writer, from her short stories, novels and juvenile literature, primarily based in social realism to her latest novels, which are radically distant from the mimetic worlds of earlier stories. If we examine her last three novels as a whole, we see that she is exploring older narrative forms; in *La torre vigía* and *Olvidado Rey Gudú* there are strong ties to the chivalric novel whereas in *Aranmanoth* she steers her reader in the direction of the legend and the epic poem.

In each of these novels, however, the elements of contemporary fantasy can be traced to fairy tales, the gothic and chivalric novel, the epic poem, the saga and the

legend. In subsequent chapters, I will discuss the many facets of fantasy literature, including how it explores our own reality through the creation of a radically different world, its potential for recapturing the meaning of life, how it may offer what is elsewhere denied, and how it may deliver what is desired. Within these other worlds, the relationship of the protagonist to other characters and to the environment will also be examined in order to determine the degree of fantasy that each novel exhibits. In addition, I will view all of the novels as a whole to establish the evolution of Matute's fantasy trilogy. The reason(s) why Matute chose this mode over realism, after twenty-five years of silence, will also be explored in subsequent chapters. Finally, each of the three novels will be seen as part of a progression, as one body of work that reflects an evolution of her writing through the mode of fantasy.

Fantasy writing seems to be a curious choice for any writer if one considers our massive consumption of entertainment based on "reality." Reality television earns higher ratings than dramas or sitcoms and the people who are center stage on these programs become the protagonists of our living rooms. Each week we can voyeuristically follow the events of their lives caught on tape. Daily sightings of actors and actresses receive more attention than the events of the characters they portray in films, causing tabloids to compete for up-to-the-minute photos. We also chronicle our very existence more than ever with interfaces such as Facebook and My Space, which allow its users to detail what he or she is doing "right now." However, despite this frenzy of realism fantasy is apparently on the rise.

Why *is* fantasy is more popular than ever? Movies like *Lord of the Rings* have spawned a slew of films based on fantasy. These include *Eragon*, *Enchanted*, *The*

Golden Compass, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and *Avatar*—and they are not just for children. Even adults attest to delighting in J.K. Rowling’s series of Harry Potter movies and books. Perhaps this phenomenon is due to our need for diversion and escape to other worlds, other realms in which time is not necessarily discernable. In these arenas epic battles of good and evil are won and lost and we witness the birth and death of dynasties on one infinite plane in which anything is possible.

Our imagination is allowed to run free and participate in these worlds that exist in alternate settings exempt from the laws of science and time, as human beings know them. There we may lose, or even find, ourselves in other creatures and in languages spoken by alien tongues. As we marvel at supernatural feats made possible by magic, the conventions of our reality are suspended. In most contemporary cultures, science has been the basis for almost all meaning and explanations. However, it does not provide a justification of morals. Right and wrong have never been defined by science; there is no litmus test for good and evil. But in fantasy we can recover what may be missing from contemporary culture—the meaning of life or a definition of right and wrong. Are we turning to fantasy to legitimize what science cannot validate? When we see the forces of good and evil pitted against one another in faraway dimensions we are offered a safe perspective from which we can evaluate our own reality.

Several well-known contemporary authors have utilized fantasy not only as means of escaping reality, but also as a tool for investigating current issues. T. A. Shippey, in *Magill’s Guide to Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature* (1996), states, “It has been pointed out that authors as different as J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, Kurt

Vonnegut, Jr., Ursula Le Guin, Stephen Donaldson, and Gene Wolfe are all clearly addressing through their fantasies (just as much through their works of science fiction) such grim and vital issues for the twentieth century and beyond as the origins of evil, the nature of war, and the future of the planet [. . .]” (xviii). As Shippey observes, fantasy is no longer a mere diversion; it functions to indicate radical shifts in our beliefs and reasoning and acts to combat prejudice and ethnocentrism. These radical shifts often are the result of extracting the reader from his/her reality and placing him/her in an imaginary world, thereby allowing the reader to recover a different sense of perspective (Stableford xlv). Sheila Egoff, in her book *Worlds Within: Children’s Fantasy from the Middle Ages to Today* (1988), agrees that the purpose of fantasy is not to allow the reader a permanent escape into “never-land,” but to return the reader to his or her world with a new perspective (15). Just as Alice returns from an alternative world beyond the looking glass, so do we as readers return to our own world after having visited an imaginary one. By doing this we discover a new perspective and what was once familiar seems foreign or changed. Other critics believe that fantasy literature not only offers us more insight about the world in which we live, but it also allows us either to discover or recover the meaning of life (Timmerman 2).

Kathryn Hume goes one step further when she notes that sometimes we may not even be capable of expressing this newly recovered, or discovered, meaning of life in realistic terms. In *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Culture* (1984), she recognizes some of the advantages that fantasy can provide and states that we live in a world in which we, as readers, automatically doubt the reality (and the interpretation of that reality) that the author gives us. She writes, “Much of what we feel

in life can easily enough be represented in realistic terms, but some of the experiences that move us most derive from more alien realms of experience, which we have represented in literature through the use of fantasy” (42-43). Hume also notes that our collective perspective regarding the importance of the individual has shifted. She says that at one time it felt natural to focus on the individual, but now we live within societies and with sciences in which the individual is a negligible statistic. As the world’s population grows and globalization expands, our personal and cultural identities shrink. Numbers have replaced names as our social security or driver’s license numbers define us. Moreover, in the age of the Internet, user names and passwords replace our identities, and ironically, sites such as Facebook foster isolation rather face-to-face communication.

As a result of these shifts in perspective, a sense of deprivation or loss may occur. But through fantasy, we can recreate what may be denied to us from reality, as Brian Attebery argues in his book *Strategies of Fantasy* (1992). He examines the limitations of realism and proposes that unlike fantasy literature, realism provides everything for us, leaving little to the imagination (67). By contrast, in fantasy the lack of or the alteration of physical rules implores us to look for moral rules. We must draw our own connections from beginning to end, especially if time is fragmented, looped or reversed (Attebery, *Strategies* 67). Rosemary Jackson, in *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion* (1981), also proposes that fantasy is a literature of denial—the denial of desire. That is, due to cultural constraints, what we are missing manifests itself as forbidden. In fantasy this lack translates into the impossible. Fantasy for Jackson, then,

is a literature of subversion because it challenges the political or social order by revealing what a culture forbids or denies its participants.

Another twist on the connection between fantasy and denial is explored by Lucie Armitt when she recalls Louis Marin's essay on utopia titled, "The Frontier of Utopia" (1993), in which he compares fantasy to the horizon that is out of reach because it always recedes as we advance. In *Fantasy Fiction: An Introduction* (2005), Armitt acknowledges the textual interplay that fantasy literature offers if we recognize that it is at once a limit and infinity, never allowing us to locate it. She relates fantasy writing to this concept and states that it is, "a hyperbolic, endlessly expansive desire for the uncontainable, trapped within the constraints of a literary genre in which narrative closure is ruthlessly effected" (4). This closure reminds us of the limits of our own reality, making fantasy literature another way to both represent the real and return us to reality.

Slavoj Žižek, in his book *The Plague of Fantasies* (1997), takes a psychoanalytic approach by addressing cyberspace and specifically virtual reality. He proposes that, like Lacan's theory of the gaze and the Other, virtual reality offers a virtual self that is like a mirror image, projecting our own fantasies onto a constructed subject. Cyberspace, then, becomes a limitless visual canvas. He goes on to explain that cyberspace opens itself to an infinite number of possibilities, which then becomes a paradox because this infinite space is "far more suffocating than any actual confinement" (154). That is, without a visual limit, there is no point from which the object can return the gaze; we no longer see something. He says, "the field of vision is reduced to a flat surface, and 'reality' itself is perceived as a visual hallucination" (154).

This flat surface, like a horizon, has no boundaries but neither does it offer any exit. Žižek writes, “This, then, is the Real awaiting us, and all endeavors to symbolize the Real from utopian [. . .] to the blackest dystopian ones [. . .] are just that: so many attempts to avoid the true ‘end of history’” (155). Like Žižek’s theory of cyberspace, fantasy literature offers unending possibilities to the imagination, opening up a new horizon that takes place in an Other World. However, this alternate universe may actually be a way of representing the Real. By expressing the infinite in fantasy, are we really talking about our own finite existence?

Žižek also discusses the limits of modern science, which allow for no Beyond. Science tries to abolish the unexplained, which is the domain of human imagination. Without this dark spot of the unexplained, without some other place into which we project fantasies, there is no guarantee of meaning. He says, “Perhaps this very growing disenchantment with our actual social world accounts for the fascination exerted by cyberspace: it is as if in it we again encounter a Limit beyond which the mysterious domain of the phantasmic Otherness opens up, as if the screen of the interface is today’s version of the blank, of the unknown region in which we can locate our own Shangri-las or the kingdoms of *She*” (160). And the blank pages that fantasy writing fills are another way of projecting our own fantasies of meaning, giving a location for that other world that the imagination conjures up. Like Lacan’s mirror stage, in this alternate universe that our fantasies create, we find “the other side of the Same” (Žižek 161). That is, we find not a mirror image *per se*, but a reflection of what we see in our daily lives, placed in a setting foreign to our own but one that gives rise to meaning.

This alternate vision sheds light on our own reality when we, like Alice in Wonderland, go beyond the looking glass.

Matute also views fantasy writing as a way to find the Same while searching for the Other. When she officially took possession of chair “K” in the Real Academia in January of 1998, she gave a speech entitled “En el bosque” in which she defended fantasy. Recalling *Alice in Wonderland*, she noted that the moment in which Alice passes through the looking glass is one of the most magical moments in the history of literature because it represents the portal that leads to the other side. This instance constitutes the desire to know another world and enter into the kingdom of fantasy through our own imaginations. Matute said in her address, “Porque no debemos olvidar que lo que el espejo nos ofrece no es otra cosa que la imagen más fiel y al mismo tiempo más extraña de nuestra propia realidad” (“En el bosque,” *Matute*). She goes on to defend fairy tales by saying that they are not really what we believe them to be. They are not just trivial stories for children; they are the expression of all the greatness and misery of humankind. In her most recent novels, we see the vestiges of these fairy tales for grown-ups in which characters present us with a spectrum of human behavior, from the most barbaric and inhumane acts to gestures of love and self-sacrifice.

Matute places enormous importance on imagination and fantasy because, as she explains, they form an indissoluble part of our lives, since our dreams, our desires and our memories are part of reality. For her, writing is a form of memory, a privileged type of recollection. She knows how to write stories because she is searching for her own life story. To her, writing is the search for a distant tale that lies in our deepest recollections. In her speech to the Real Academia she goes on to explain that writing is like an

anticipated memory, the fruit of a discomfort interspersed with nostalgia; not only is it nostalgia for an unknown past, but also for the future, and for a tomorrow. Writing is a memory that we do not yet know but that we anticipate, which is stronger than the nostalgia of yesterday or of a desired time in which we would have wanted to live. Literature for her is the manifestation of this unease, and such dissatisfaction is expressed in as many ways as there are authors. But also, according to Matute, literature is the most marvelous expression of a desire for something better. Writing is the search for that something better that is found in *la palabra*. She says, “Esta búsqueda del reductor interior, esta desesperada esperanza de un remoto reencuentro con nuestro ‘yo’ más íntimo, no es sino el intento de ir más allá de la propia vida, de estar en las otras vidas, el patético deseo de llegar a comprender no solamente la palabra ‘semejante’, que ya es una tarea realmente ardua, sino entender la palabra ‘otro’” (“En el bosque,” *Matute*). Throughout her life she has been in search of the word that is capable of illuminating the “País de las Maravillas” found in our world and in our language—the word that is capable of transforming what is personal into something universal, and the imagined into something real.

Matute and the aforementioned critics provide possible reasons as to why fantasy writing has exploded recently by discussing how it explores our own reality through an other world, offers a way to recover the potential meanings of life, recreates what is denied and manifests what is desired. But when we attempt to *define* fantasy, it is worth recalling Aristotle’s classification of works of fiction, as explained in his *Poetics* (350 B.C.E.), in which he studies the various relationships of the hero of a story to other men and to the environment. Based on Aristotle’s categorizations, Northrop Frye

discusses fiction in terms of modes in the *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), which helps distinguish different kinds of literary works. According to Frye (who follows Aristotle), if the hero's actions make him or her superior to other human beings and the environment, then the story is classified as a myth and the hero is considered a deity or a divine figure. However, when the hero is identified as superior to other humans and to the environment, and when s/he is still considered a human being and not a god, the work may be classified as a romance. In this situation, the hero's actions are supernatural, yet s/he is still a mortal. The ordinary laws of nature are suspended and non-human creatures such as ogres and talking animals populate the environment. Typically we find these circumstances in legends, folk tales and fantasy. In a third instance, when the protagonist is superior to others but inferior to nature, the story is written in a high mimetic mode. In this instance, the epic and tragedy exemplify the category in which the hero is authoritative and powerful and often battles the forces of nature. In a fourth classification, if the hero is neither superior to others nor to his/her environment, this is an example of the low mimetic mode as seen in comedies and realistic fiction. Finally, if the audience has a feeling of condescension towards the hero because s/he is mentally or physically inferior to us, the work is considered ironic.

If we were to place these modes on a continuum, we would see a polarity. On one end of the spectrum we find realism, or works that imitate reality, and on the other end lie works of fantasy, which take place on an imaginary plane. Between them exists a gray area in which some fiction will tend to be more realistic, with fantastic elements, while other stories lean more towards fantasy, with realistic events, settings or characters.

While Frye also bases his theory of modes on the relationship between a hero and his environment, other critics define mode as the general tone of a work. John Frow, in his book *Genre: The New Critical Idiom* (2006), explains that modes are used in an adjectival sense; they specify tone and are understood as extensions of certain genres. Citing Gérard Genette, Frow refers to an existential or anthropological “feeling” conveyed by modes that may themselves be epic, lyrical, dramatic, but also tragic, comic and romantic (65). Similarly, Attebery explains how these feelings translate into a way of telling stories, or a way of portraying the world and taking a stance on how one sees it, and he agrees that there is an underlying polarity to modes. On one end we find mimesis and on the other we find fantasy. To illustrate this, he explains that when a child imitates a parent, tells on a friend or draws a tree, it is realism. But lies, games and dreams are all fantasy (Attebery 4). Rather than standing alone, modes are usually qualifications or modifications of particular genres such as the *gothic* novel or the *epic* poem.

In *The Architext* (1992), Genette expounds on the relationship of modes to genres and describes Klaus Hempfer’s pyramid-shaped structure which offers a hierarchical distinction between modes and genres. Hempfer places modes of writing, which are based on Plato’s model of enunciation, at the top of the pyramid. For instance, a mode may be narrative or dramatic; next in the pyramid under modes we find “types” which are specifications of the modes, such as first-person or omniscient narration; finally “genres” are the “concrete historical realizations” of the text and take the shape of novels, novellas, poems, etc. (Genette 74). In reference to Matute’s works that are discussed here, Genette would say that in terms of genre they are novels and

that fantasy is their mode. Fantasy is a way of describing the tone of the work, alongside the tones of comic, tragic, epic, or romantic. I do not believe that Genette would define fantasy and mimesis as being polar opposites, but rather, he would see them as colors on an artist's palette that lend depth and definition to a work. In an adjectival sense, then, all three of Matute's most recent novels are colored by the same tone of "other worldliness." That is, in each story she describes an alternate reality distinct from the one in which we exist and she presents a new order in which what we perceive to be impossible is possible.

For the purpose of this dissertation, in addition to discussing what Matute's most recent novels say about contemporary reality through fantasy, I will be looking at fantasy as a mode, which belongs on one end of the continuum of literature with realism on the other end, and I will study the evolution of Matute's writing through this approach. In each chapter I will discuss the relationship of the protagonist to other human beings and to his or her environment in order to see how each novel explores the mode of fantasy. That is, I will look at the protagonist's actions and discern if s/he can be defined as superior or inferior to others and the environment. Is s/he mortal? Are his or her actions confined to the ordinary laws of nature? Also, I will look at how each story is told in order to gauge where these works lie along the spectrum of realism and fantasy.

But fantasy is more than just a tone that describes a work of fiction, a way that a story is told, or how the protagonist relates to human beings and his or her environment; successful fantasy relies heavily upon the reader and the pact s/he makes between the text and the context in which the story is set. I refer to Gary K. Wolfe who, in *Critical Terms for Science Fiction and Fantasy: A Glossary Guide to Scholarship* (1986),

defines fantasy as “A fictional narrative describing events that the reader believes to be impossible” (38). Wolfe also cites Rabkin’s definition of fantasy as “The ‘polar opposite’ of reality; literature characterized by a direct reversal of ground rules from those of everyday existence” (quoted in Wolfe 38-39). In fantasy, the reader realizes that what happens in the text cannot happen in his/her reality. That is, there is no explanation that can convince the reader that those events could have happened in his/her daily existence. Fantasy is the “existence of the supernatural or impossible worlds of another order of reality from that in which we exist and form our notions of possibility; the existence of beings or objects that are beyond any remotely conceivable extension of our plane of reality or thought. As soon as the supernatural becomes possible, we are no longer dealing with fantasy but with science fiction” (Manlove 2-3). The moment that the supernatural occurrences are set in the reader’s universe and the events or civilizations depicted become familiar or recognizable, we are no longer in another world, regardless of whether the story takes place in the present, in the past, or thousands of years in the future. The reader must know that the characters and actions are beyond the bounds of possibility.

Shippey agrees that fantasy deals with what is believed to be impossible and what takes place in an alternate reality. However, he goes on to state that what makes this alternate reality alien to the reader’s reality is that the same laws of cause and effect do not apply; this other world created by fantasy is ruled by magic, not science (Shippey xvi). Juan Molina Porrás’s definition of fantasy in *Cuentos fantásticos en la España del realismo* (2006) supports this categorization by referring to works of fantasy

as “maravillosos,” laden with events and creatures that outstretch the confines of the reader’s world:

las historias que acaecen en tiempos y espacios que el lector sabe inexistentes [. . .] En el pacto que establece el narrador con sus lectores no existe ninguna regla que impida que nos traslademos a mundos y lugares inexistentes, y por ello, los límites de la fantasía se amplían al máximo. Los ogros, las hadas, las brujas, los dragones o los gnomos gozan de libertad de movimientos porque su existencia es aceptada con la mayor naturalidad por los focalizadores, los narradores y los lectores. Todos sabemos que son seres que solo habitan en las páginas de los libros. (42)⁵

In order for fantasy literature to be successful, then, the reader must make a pact with the text and allow him or herself to become engaged in this world in which magic is superior to science. Fantasy requires something more, “an act of credence” as John Irwin phrases it in *The Game of the Impossible* (1976). It is this readerly perspective—an act of credence or believability—that separates post-1800s fantasy from ancient tales of myth, legend and folklore. The reader must decide whether or not to engage in this act. However, the author must also devise strategies to convince the reader of the existence of this other world (Irwin 66).

In other words, the way in which fantasy is presented to the audience can either encourage or discourage this pact of credence. When only the impossible exists and nothing else, the fantasy world becomes believable. That is, when the “other world” created by the writer becomes the *only* world, the writer has fulfilled his or her part of

the pact. It is not enough to insert a world of fantasy into a reality that the reader can easily recognize; this new world must be a universe entirely on its own. However, once this goal is accomplished, it is still up to the reader to participate in the pact. Irwin reminds us that among children, this pact is made all the time simply by complying with the magic words of “let’s pretend” or “let’s make believe.” Like children playing a game, the reader of fantasy is persuaded to participate in a new system of “facts” by which s/he has agreed to abide, pretending to reject the rules of his or her reality in favor of a new game called Fantasy (Irwin 41, 66-67).

But one still has to ask what makes readers in the twenty-first century more inclined to accept as impossible the events or worlds created by fantasy when readers of ancient texts believed them to be true? It is the context of belief in which they are embedded that distinguishes them, as Shippey explains (xvi). It is easier for today’s audience to believe in a voyage to Mars than it is to believe in the existence of the dragon that appears in the epic tale of *Beowulf*. Due to science and rationalism, circumstances are different now than they were for audiences of Old Norse or Old English poems or chivalric novels. With the technological and scientific advancements that have occurred since the eighteenth century, what used to be considered mysterious and implausible has since been explained. For readers living prior to the introduction of the scientific method, the existence of a dragon on Earth was very plausible, but the modern reader is skeptical and too well-informed (Shippey xvi).⁶ If an author of fantasy chooses to incorporate creatures such as the dragons that also appeared in ancient texts, these creatures have to make sense in an admissible setting. For example, even though the existence of the dragon Smaug in Tolkien’s *The Hobbit* (1937) would be

impossible in our reality, the author's duty is to create an alternate world or universe in which this creature could believably survive. Therefore, as mentioned above, the author must try to persuade the reader to enter into a pact of "let's pretend" in order for this other world to make sense. As Armitt states, fantasy creates worlds that are outside the horizon of our own existence instead of being located within that boundary. In these worlds the reader witnesses the "unknowableness of life" and imagines the existence of such places as the Garden of Eden, although none of us is able to travel there (Armitt 5).

Works written prior to the scientific method such as myths, legends and folklore can be distinguished from contemporary fantasy due to the presence of local color and known cultural references. Fantasy literature written before the scientific revolution was replete with marvelous feats and characters, but they were all based on existing cultures and beliefs, they described local customs, and sometimes they recreated local or regional dialects. But now fantasy is shaped through artifice rather than by cultural belief, according to Egoff. The fantasist creates a private and metaphorical vision rather than a public dream, and the reader is asked to have faith in artifice rather than in the events that lie behind it. For example, in *The Epic of Gilgamesh* the story is centered on a Mesopotamian hero, Gilgamesh, who is based on a king whose historical reign is believed to lie within the period from 2700 B.C.E. to 2500 B.C.E. But modern day fantasists like Tolkien "create the backgrounds that would give credence to the adventures of their heroes" (Egoff 3). In the previous example of *The Hobbit* the dragon Smaug resides on Middle-earth, lives in a time "between the dawn of Faerie and the Dominion of Men" and speaks a fictional language that Tolkien himself invented (Egoff

3). In this case, there is no known cultural reference that the modern reader can identify. Instead, Tolkien creates his own universe of cultural references.

Fantasy continues to evolve today, which has made the issue of formulating a standard definition challenging. However, there are certain characteristics upon which most critics agree. In this dissertation, I define fantasy as the creation of an other world ruled by magic, not science, and believed to be impossible by modern readers. In order for a work of fantasy to be successful, the reader must enter into a pact of credence, but the author must also create characters, a situation, and a tone that convince the reader of the existence of the creatures and occurrences within this alternate universe.

Matute's *La torre vigía*, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* and *Aranmanoth* belong to the mode of fantasy because they situate us in worlds removed from our own, both spatially and temporally, and the reader recognizes the impossibility of the existence of the events and characters of these novels. All three texts incorporate fairy tales, chivalric novels, myths and/or legends, epic poems, and the presence of non-human characters further emphasizes the gap between the fictional world and ours, but the novels belong to the mode of fantasy and are not purely myths, legends, or fairy tales. Also, the spatial and temporal exoticism of each of the novels—the end of the first millennium or during a completely foreign and unspecified time period—stresses the tone of “other worldliness.” The relationship of the protagonist to human beings and his or her environment will also be explored in order to see how each novel can be categorized as fantasy. Furthermore, I will discuss possible advantages of fantasy over realism to determine why Matute chose this mode for her most recent novels.

While I am concentrating on fantasy from a post-1800 perspective, I do not pretend to argue that fantasy did not exist prior to the 1800s—quite the opposite. It appears in nearly every culture's literary inheritance in the form of myths, legends, folklore, epics and religious parables. However, prior to the nineteenth century, fantasy was an element embedded in many epics, legends and myths, but it was not a mode all to itself. With the solidification of the genre of the novel in the nineteenth century, we find a competition arising between realism and stories that were entirely based on fantasy and provided an alternative for an audience who was growing weary of realistic fiction grounded in reason and scientific explanation. Works of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries involving fantasy often blended fantastic or supernatural events within a realistic narrative and the reader questioned the existence of these occurrences. But it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that the distinction between literary works that incorporated fantastic elements and those that were considered pure fantasy became clear.⁷ Fantasy literature acted as a counterpoint to reason and incorporated a tone and a content that rejected scientific explanation as a means to make sense of the world around us. Accounts of the impossible and the imaginary were no longer used to comprehend the immense and seemingly supernatural forces ; fantasy fiction, in part, was meant for pleasure, not reason (Mathews 11).

By definition, therefore, fantasy goes *beyond* comprehension. In fantasy literature from the nineteenth century onward, magic has been accepted as an explanation for extraordinary or supernatural events, or, conversely, no explanation has been necessary at all. Unlike realism fantasy does not require logic. One of the purposes of

contemporary fantasy is to entertain its readers, giving them an alternate reality that emphasizes imagination and invention. The audience of contemporary fantasy craves a fiction that strays from the logic of science and reason, either preferring magic to provide answers or simply not demanding any explanation. This specialized mode of fiction emerged in the nineteenth century largely due to William Morris and George MacDonald, who are considered by many critics to be the pioneers of modern fantasy. Both men published fantasy stories in the 1850s, incorporating elements from the vocabulary, syntax and models of storytelling from ancient texts like Homer's *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* or *The Arabian Nights* (Mathews 16).

Inspired by Morris, J. R. R. Tolkien is also widely considered to be one of the fathers of modern fantasy because he noted that fairy tales, a genre in which fantasy plays a vital role, served a much larger purpose than being mere juvenile entertainment. Brian Stableford, in the *Historical Dictionary of Fantasy Literature* (2005), attributes the theoretical beginnings of modern fantasy to Tolkien who, in 1938 and during his lecture entitled "On Fairy Tales," declared that fairy tales should be considered useful for adult fiction. He viewed fantasy as an older and higher form of art, preferring it to realism, and he established that fantasy based on fairy tales serves the psychological functions of recuperation, escape and consolation. The function of fantasy for Tolkien is to recover the vision of childhood; it allows for liberation from the conventions of reality in order to escape the mortal woes of hunger, poverty, sorrow and injustice; and at the end of the fairy tale, we find that fantasy can deliver the good catastrophe, or eucatastrophe, as Tolkien termed it. By this he refers to the need for a happy ending that produces everlasting joy. For Matute, fantasy is a fairy tale for grown-ups, but she does not

subscribe to the need for a happy ending, as we will see in all three of her novels; fantasy is another way to investigate, rather than escape, the darker side of the human experience.⁸

Although fantasy was attracting more attention by the end of the nineteenth century, what some critics consider to be the Golden Age of fantasy in the English language did not happen until the 1950s and 60s with the works of C.S. Lewis, Philippa Pearce, Lucy M. Boston, Mary Norton and Alan Garner.⁹ Twentieth-century technological and scientific advancements greatly affected fantasy writing and its reception. The alternative worlds and phenomena found in fantasy became more desirable to readers due to a change in our perception of natural laws. The theory of relativity, quantum physics, atomic energy, space exploration, artificial intelligence and new hypotheses about the origins of the universe altered the ways in which we perceived reality, and fantasy was easier to embrace (Zipes 150). However, it was not until the 1960s that fantasy became the subject of academic study because Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy was published in a paperback edition and enjoyed enormous success. Then in 1969 Lin Carter's book *Tolkien: A Look Behind The Lord of the Rings* opened the floodgates for many contemporary scholars who chose fantasy as their focus of academic study. Carter's definition of modern fantasy quickly became polemical and was discussed by contemporary critics and writers alike. Manlove's survey in *Modern Fantasy* (1975), Eric S. Rabkin's *The Fantastic in Literature* (1976) and Roger Sale's *Fairy Tales and After* (1978) all contributed to defining fantasy literature and amplifying its roots. Some years later John Clute published the expansive reference *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* (1996). Despite the many divergent approaches to

modern fantasy and the equally numerous attempts to define it, nearly all critics and writers do agree that modern fantasy takes place in another world, and that the events that happen in this other world are considered impossible by the reader.

Internationally, Spanish writers who incorporated fantasy in their fiction also gained recognition and enjoyed an expanded readership in the nineteenth century. In Spain, Pedro Antonio de Alarcón published *El amigo de la muerte* (1852), based on a popular tale in which Death befriends a man who becomes a doctor and can foresee the precise time of his patients's demise. Almost twenty years later, *Las leyendas* (1871) by Gustavo Adolfo Bécquer showcased tales in which the supernatural occurred and characters such as nymphs and gnomes appeared in medieval or dream-like settings. In 1951, Rafael Sánchez Ferlosio, a contemporary of Matute's, wrote *Industrias y andanzas de Alfahuí*, which is the story of a boy who is expelled from school for setting a bad example because he writes in an unintelligible alphabet. As a result, his mother locks him in his room, but he escapes with a rooster that sits on top of a weather vane and comes to life. The rooster descends from the roof and begins to talk, eventually becoming the first teacher of the boy, named Alfahuí. The stories that comprise the novel are told by an omniscient narrator and are filled with magical anecdotes, such as the shadow of a dead ox that rises from the corpse and enters the water. All the while, the young protagonist accepts these events as being normal.

As a young writer, Matute also contributed to the rise of fantasy in Spanish fiction. Like Sánchez Ferlosio, she blended fantasy with reality in some of her short story collections such as *Los niños tontos* (1956), which delves into the world of childhood and the realm of dreams. However, even though these stories concerned

themselves with childhood, they were always meant to be taken seriously by adults. A case in point is Matute's "El árbol." In this brief narrative from *Los niños tontos*, a boy becomes fascinated by the reflection of a tree in a window and expects it to come for him. Ultimately the child is whisked away by the night on the branches of the tree, presumably to his death. In another story from the same collection entitled "El incendio," imagination and fantasy are depicted as being as strong as reality when a child draws flames on his house with his colored pencils and the house then burns to the ground. Matute's interest in fantasy grew, as evidenced by the tales of childhood and adolescence written exclusively for children in books such as *El tiempo* (1956) and *El saltamontes verde* (1960). The stories found in these collections embedded elements of fantasy and were written in terms that children could easily understand. Another collection, *Tres y un sueño* (1961), deals with the loss of childhood, recalling the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen, and the world of make-believe and the loss of childhood are once again evoked in *El polizón del 'Ulises'* (1965), beginning with the epigraph from *Peter Pan* that reads, "Todos los niños crecen, salvo uno." In this story, Jujú, the child protagonist, is raised by his aunts, and escapes every afternoon to the attic, pretending that it is a boat named Ulises. His dog, who he calls his boatswain, and a dove that he names la señorita Florentina become his companions on imaginary voyages. One day, Jujú encounters a fugitive in the attic whom he shelters and then helps to escape.

Despite these sprinklings of fantasy that pepper Matute's short stories and juvenilia, most of her readers were surprised by the publication of *La torre vigía* (1971) and her next two novels, all of which turn completely to the realm of fantasy. However,

the shift appears to be a natural sequence of events if one considers the major impact that her childhood had on her as well as the early fiction that she wrote. In her 1998 speech to the members of the Real Academia Española, she says that the forest has always been a world of imagination, fantasy and dreams. She began to love the forest as a little girl, when she was taken to live with her grandparents because of an illness she suffered. Although she was born in Barcelona, much of her childhood and adolescence was spent with her grandparents in Mansilla de la Sierra, located in the region of La Rioja, about 185 miles north of Madrid. This setting would have a huge effect on her writing because of the mysterious forest into which the young Matute would often escape and hide. It is here that she first discovered the power of invention and imagination, as well as her fascination with the forest to which she refers in her speech and which appears in several short stories and novels.

Even before she knew how to read she thought books were like mysterious forests and wondered how those little black ants crawling across the pages could lift up a whole other world before her eyes and her ears. She knew that creatures, desires and unknown epochs were teeming within the pages. Suddenly, the spoken word could be found in the trees and bushes. Even as a little girl this fascination with the forest and the books that surrounded her led her to know that she wanted to participate in the imaginary world of literature. She says:

la primera vez que leí la palabra “bosque” en un libro de cuentos, supe que siempre me movería dentro de ese ámbito. Toda la vida de un bosque—misterioso, atractivo, terrorífico, lejano y próximo, oscuro y transparente—encontraba su lugar sobre el papel, en el arte combinatorio

de las palabras. Jamás había experimentado, ni volvería a experimentar en toda mi vida, una realidad más cercana, más viva y que me revelara la existencia de otras realidades tan vivas y tan cercanas como aquella que me reveló el bosque, el real y el creado por palabras. (“En el bosque,” *Matute*)

For Matute, Mansilla de la Sierra became the place where she discovered she wanted to write, but later it would become the setting in which her young protagonists would discover the transition from childhood to adulthood.

While the forest proved to be a powerful influence on Matute, the fantasy literature that she read and the fairy tales told to her as a child also contributed to her motivation to write. She read *Alice in Wonderland*, *Peter Pan* and the stories of Hans Christian Andersen and the Brothers Grimm. She declared *Alice in Wonderland* to be her Bible and said, “To it I owe my acceptance of the absurd in life. Reading it, I was in my element. It is not a common style; the absurd is not easy. I think there are very few people who understand it” (Díaz 26).

As a more mature writer, Matute would write novels based in social realism for the bulk of her career. These included *Los Abel* (1948), *Las luciérnagas* (1955), her Spanish Civil War novel *Los hijos muertos* (1958), *Fiesta al Noroeste* (1959) and her trilogy *Los mercaderes* (1960-1969). It was not until the publication of *La torre vigía* in 1971 that Matute returned wholeheartedly to her predilection for make-believe and wrote a novel completely in the mode of fantasy. Perhaps as Matute matured as a writer, she felt the need to plunge into the world that captivated her as a child, utilizing fantasy as a means of portraying destruction and the apocalypse rather than a happily-

ever-after ending, as we will see in *La torre vigía*. It appears that as an experienced author, Matute has finally come into her own, feeling comfortable enough to incorporate into her writing such an uncommon mode which, as the writer herself puts it, few people comprehend.

In this dissertation, I will analyze *La torre vigía*, *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, and *Aranmanoth* to discover several facets of fantasy literature, including how an other world can comment on contemporary reality, expound on possible meanings of life, grant what is denied, and/or yield what is desired. Within these other worlds I will discuss the relationship of the protagonist or primary characters to other beings and to his or her environment in order to see how each novel treats the limits and/or expectations of fantasy. Are the protagonists confined to the ordinary laws of nature? Do the actions of the main character(s) make him/ her superior or inferior to others and the environment? In addition to analyzing these relationships, the reader's connection to the text will be investigated to determine to what extent s/he may or may not enter into a pact of "let's pretend," and I will look at the manner in which each novel is narrated and its tone in an effort to place these works along a continuum of mimesis and fantasy. Finally I will view all of the novels as a whole to determine how Matute's fantasy trilogy has evolved.

The first chapter deals with *La torre vigía* (1971), a novel that surprised most readers familiar with Matute's previous *novelas sociales* because of its chivalric theme, unfamiliar geographical location and temporally removed epoch. It is a clear departure from the recognizable contemporary Spanish settings of her previous novels and short stories. In *La torre vigía*, a deceased, nameless protagonist tells us his story of

becoming a knight during what seems to be a medieval age. The physical setting is just as ambiguous as the temporal one, which only emphasizes the dimension of fantasy; it is a world apart from our own. The protagonist's story spans a period from when he is six until he turns sixteen. At the end of the novel, on the eve of becoming a knight, the protagonist decides to die at the hands of his brothers instead of pursuing a life that will inevitably be filled with war and violence. *La torre vigía* portrays a cruel, primitive and barbaric world, replete with sexual abuse and social injustice.

In this novel we can see how fantasy may be a means of commenting on contemporary reality by comparing current events with those that take place in Matute's barbaric and medieval setting. *La torre vigía* presents us with a locale that, at first glance, appears far removed from our own; however, this alternate reality is actually a way of engaging contemporary human existence if we take notice of the apocalyptic overtones, reminding us of the Holocaust, the atomic bomb, and the ever present threat of global destruction (Pérez, "Apocalipsis" 42). Matute presents a world filled with gothic elements such as a remote and isolated landscape, primitive and brutal characters, and enclosed and decaying spaces in which we find the opposite of what we expect. In this novel, instead of kings and queens Matute gives us a baron and baroness who assume the form of ogres; and in the place of fraternity, we find fratricide.

I will be exploring how this text uses the Cain and Abel theme (which runs through all of Matute's fiction) as a metaphor in order to critique contemporary society. Also, the fact that the protagonist narrates posthumously raises several questions regarding the boundaries of fantasy literature. I will be analyzing his position as both alive and dead and I will compare him to other characters and his environment to reveal

this novel's place in the world of fantasy writing. The reader's participation in the novel is also crucial to the believability of the novel, especially because the protagonist is dead. If the reader refuses to plunge him/herself into this decaying world of make believe, then the novel cannot be successful. I will be exploring the reader's involvement and compare and contrast it to Matute's next novel, *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, which, as mentioned earlier, was published twenty-five years later. As a result, I will discuss this temporal gap in the dates of publication for these two novels vis-à-vis the evolution of the trilogy as a whole. Is *La torre vigía* an obvious first fantasy novel if the date of publication were unknown to the reader? Does Matute's second fantasy novel facilitate this pact between the reader and the text more so than the first?

Chapter Two discusses the apocalyptic universe of the second work, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* (1996), and its representation of violence and brutality among kingdoms and families. Set in what seems to resemble the Middle Ages, the story is a dramatic saga about the inception and expansion of the kingdom of Olar. While the central focus is on King Gudú and his incapacity to love, Matute resuscitates the same Cain and Abel theme found in the previous novel, but she expands it to include patricide as well as homicide between relatives. Gudú's absolute incapacity to love and the barbarism found throughout the novel underscores the profound lack of humanity, which has a correlation to the end of the second millennium in the regular occurrence of war and aggression.

The story takes place mostly in castles or on the battlefield, and the main characters come from nobility. Many of the protagonists are static, with the exception of Queen Ardid, a young orphan who has the ability to perform witchcraft. We see her

grow into a queen, eventually becoming the mother of Gudú. I will focus on these two main characters and explore how their actions may or may not be confined to the laws of nature and why. If they have limitations, what are they and do they reveal a moral message vis-à-vis supernatural abilities? And if fantasy has the ability to restore what is missing or provide what is denied, then what is Matute saying when she uses fantasy not as a means to escape the dark side of our own existence, but rather to delve profoundly into it with a novel that spans over 700 pages. Is the dynastic structure and extraordinary length an integral part of the message she is trying to convey?

While *Olvidado Rey Gudú* and *La torre vigía* differ greatly in terms of their extension, both novels have many similarities that stem from the connection between the chivalric novel and fairy tales; both texts include dragons, magicians, princesses, sorcerers, fairies, ogres and witches within an exotic, temporally distant world. Each one is set in sterile, primitive and barbaric kingdoms and includes frequent references to the apocalypse. As with *La torre vigía*, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* has a strong social subtext that criticizes the oppression of the poor, the exploitation of the weak, and the cruelty of humankind. In addition, Gudú is a “chosen one,” like the nameless narrator of *La torre vigía*. However, I will also examine how his status as a king distinguishes him from the protagonist of the previous novel.

Although there are many similarities between the first and second novels, there are some differences. *Olvidado Rey Gudú* contains more fantasy and magic due to the greater number of fairies, gnomes, elves, nymphs, sorcerers and witches who possess magical powers. Also, it is a saga told by an omniscient narrator and includes hundreds of characters who lack psychological development. Even the main characters are

marked by an overall lack of individuality, which returns us to Hume's comment that today's human being is viewed as a statistic. I will investigate how the lack of individuality and the increased occurrence of magical events affect the reader and his/her belief in the text and in the ultimate success of the novel by paying close attention to the creation of and allusion to classic fairy tales. In addition, I will discuss where Matute's second fantasy novel lies on the spectrum between realism and fantasy in relation to both its predecessor and Matute's most recent novel, *Aranmanoth* (2000).

The third chapter focuses on her latest book. Like the second novel, *Aranmanoth* is narrated by an omniscient narrator and the setting is ambiguous, although it does correspond to a feudal society. The mode of fantasy is again employed, but we find fewer chivalric overtones and more emphasis on the legend and epic poem as creations within the text. The protagonist Aranmanoth and his young stepmother Windumanoth escape together without the permission of Orso, who is Windumanoth's husband and father to Aranmanoth. Like Ardid in *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, Windumanoth is the rare female figure who is not oppressed in these patriarchal worlds. By escaping with Aranmanoth she chooses freedom and attempts to return to her homeland. They become lost in the forest but finally return to Orso. As a result, Aranmanoth is decapitated by order of his father and his head disappears mysteriously. In the end, Windumanoth's fate is unknown as Matute does not clearly state that she was killed by Orso.

Even though *Olvidado Rey Gudú* and *Aranmanoth* have much in common by way of the presence of dragons, princesses, wizards, and fairies, unlike *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, in Matute's most recent novel the plot is more conspicuous. In addition, another

major difference between *Aranmanoth* and the two previous novels is the lack of a completely apocalyptic ending. We do recognize that the last novel ends with the death of Aranmanoth, but it is not equated to an apocalypse. Instead, it is more of a redemption tale due to the death of an innocent whose story and the world within the novel continue indefinitely.

In spite of the differences, in her third novel Matute continues to utilize fantasy as a vehicle for social commentary. In *Aranmanoth*, she attacks patriarchal systems by means of Orso, the paternal figure, who allows his political allegiance to the Count to overrule his own judgment. In a sharp critique on nobility, Orso questions the vows he took as a knight when he allows his wife and son to be executed by the Count's orders. In addition, Matute investigates the struggles that humankind faces through division in the main characters. Aranmanoth's part-magical and part-human composition allows for more criticism on the desirous nature of humanity while Orso's internal conflict manifests itself literally in the scar he bears, which divides his face in two.

As in the other novels, I will investigate how Matute portrays Aranmanoth in relationship to other characters and his environment to understand where this novel situates itself along the broad spectrum between realism and fantasy. Like the previous protagonists, Aranmanoth has a sacred destiny, but I will explore how his supernatural makeup and redemptive quality make him the most elevated character in the entire trilogy. In addition to studying how Aranmanoth's characterization places this novel in the mode of fantasy, I will also explore how time vis-à-vis the legend and epic poem sustains readerly intrigue in a fantasy world.

In each chapter we will see how elements of contemporary fantasy are found in fairy tales, epics, sagas and legends, the ways in which they resurface in these novels and what Matute is saying about reality and human interaction among a variety of non-human and human characters in fantasy worlds. Also, I will examine the evolution of her writing through the mode of fantasy, and where the trilogy might stake its claim in the exponentially expanding body of fantasy literature.

NOTES

1 Matute's work has inspired a wide range of studies, including those on religious overtones in articles such as "Religious Motifs and Biblical Allusions in the Works of Ana María Matute," by Margaret E. W. Jones, which discusses the biblical roots found in her fiction, and Ruth el Saffar's "En busca de Edén: Consideraciones sobre la obra de Ana María Matute." Other articles have examined the world of childhood as a metaphor for the adult world in "El mundo de los niños en la obra de Ana María Matute," by Raquel G. Flores-Jenkins, and "The World of Childhood in the Contemporary Spanish Novel" by Phyllis Zatlín Boring. Silence has also been the subject of studies by Margaret E.W. Jones and by Donna Janine McGiboney, among others.

Silence has also been the topic of conversation in interviews with Matute in publications such as *Ana María Matute: La voz del silencio* by Marie Lise Gazarian-Gautier. Other interviews of note include "Entrevista con Ana María Matute: 'Recuperar otra vez cierta inocencia,'" by Michael Scott Doyle, and "Yo entré en la literatura a través de los cuentos." Entrevista con Ana María Matute," by Antonio Ayuso Pérez.

Many critics, and among them María Elena Soliño and Joan L. Brown, highlight Matute's role among contemporary Spanish women writers. Edenia Guillermo includes Matute as one of the most significant writers contributing to the Spanish literary canon in *Novelística española de los sesenta: Luis Martín-Santos, Juan Goytisolo, Juan Marsé, Juan Benet, Miguel Delibes, Ana María Matute*.

For excellent overviews of Matute's fiction prior to 1970, see Janet Díaz's *Ana María Matute* (1970) and Margaret E.W. Jones's *The Literary World of Ana María Matute* (1970).

2 *Primera memoria* attracted the attention of several critics who explored a variety of topics, such as the fairy tale motif in "Andersen's 'The Snow Queen' and Matute's *Primera memoria*: To the Victor Go the Spoils" and "Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria*: A Fairy Tale Gone Awry," both by Christopher L. Anderson. Soliño's, "When Wendy Grew Up: The Importance of Peter Pan in Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria* and Esther Tusquets' *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*" takes another approach by analyzing the role of juvenile literature protagonists such as Peter Pan in the development of Matia from adolescence to adulthood. Similarly, numerous essays discuss the process of maturation in Matute's works. Some examples of this trend are "From Freedom to Enclosure: 'Growing Down' in Matute's *Primera memoria*," by Lucy Lee-Bonanno and "Un paso hacia la madurez lectora: Análisis de dos cuentos de Ana María Matute/A Step Towards Reading Maturity: Analysis of Two Writings by Ana María Matute," by M. Amparo Valera.

3 Matute received a great deal of acclaim from literary critics with her trilogy *Los mercaderes*, which is comprised of the Premio Nadal winner *Primera memoria* (1960), *Los soldados lloran de noche* (1964) and *La trampa* (1969). In his article "Una novela de Ana María Matute," José Luis Cano states that the trilogy will remain one of the most beautiful and incisive works in contemporary Spanish literature (9). This collection is also considered a masterpiece by Janet Díaz in her book *Ana María Matute* (1971). Other critics like Joan L. Brown have examined the fictional ties between *Los soldados*

de noche and the other two novels that comprise the trilogy. In her article “Unidad y diversidad en *Los mercaderes* de Ana María Matute,” Brown discusses how the novels relate to one another in setting, theme, style and motifs. Edenia Guillermo and Juana Amelia Hernández, in *Novelística española de los sesenta* (1970), concentrate on the experimental techniques and narrative structure in *La trampa*. This novel is also one of the foci of Leo Hickey’s *Realidad y experiencia de la novela* in which he uses linguistics and sociology to examine empirical reality within specific cultural contexts.

To date, there are more than 20 doctoral dissertations on Matute’s fiction, including those that focus on the trilogy and include Lilit María Zekhulin’s “The Narrative Art of Ana María Matute in *Los mercaderes*” and Michael Scott Doyle’s “*Los mercaderes*: A Literary World by Ana María Matute.” Elizabeth Ordoñez uses *La trampa* to discuss the transition from female adolescence to adulthood in “Woman as Protagonist and Creator in the Contemporary Spanish Novel.” The meaning of the female characters in *Los hijos muertos* is explored in TMH’s dissertation, titled, “Four Women Novelists of Postwar Spain: Matute, Laforet, Quiroga and Medio” . The Cain and Abel theme that appears so often in Matute’s short stories and novels is the subject of Michael Abel Fernández’s doctoral dissertation, “Temas bíblicos en la obra de Ana María Matute: Su expression y significado.”

4 Since the 1990s, we can see a shift in the criticism on Matute’s more recent novels, as well as on those novels written prior to the publication of *La torre vigía* (1971); most books and articles published in the last 15 years examine the intertextuality of fairy tales, the role of gothic and apocalyptic elements or the symbolic manifestation of isolation. Many of the most recently published articles have been dedicated to her last three novels. These include Diana Diaconu’s “El amor en *Olvidado Rey Gudú* de Ana María Matute, Janet Pérez’s “Apocalipsis y milenio, cuentos de hadas y caballerías en las últimas obras de Ana María Matute,” and “More Than a Fairy Tale: Ana María Matute’s *Aranmanoth*” also by Pérez. The internet has become a source for finding commentary on these latest novels in the form of websites and blogs on fantasy literature. For information on *Olvidado Rey Gudú* see, for example, Papel en blanco (<http://www.papelenblanco.com/2007/11/27-olvidado-rey-gudu-de-ana-maria-matute>). However, none of the aforementioned critics or sites discusses *La torre vigía*, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* and *Aranmanoth* as a collective body of fiction nor addresses them as works written entirely in the mode of fantasy.

5 While Molina Porras’s definition of “maravilloso” does match the definition of fantasy in English, he does not cite any novels or short stories that would be considered contemporary fantasy. He discusses short stories by Juan Valera and his son Luis Valera; however, their tales are based on traditional Andalusian or Nordic folk tales and, therefore, they are not modern works of fantasy in which no known cultural reference is made.

6 Shippey notes that *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, a highly respected collection of annals by historians, records the appearances of flying dragons in Northumbria in the year 793 as a fact, with no intention of being fantasy.

7 Fantastic literature differs from fantasy writing in that the fantastic intrudes into reality instead of existing in another world. In his book *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (1973), Tzvetan Todorov defines fantastic fiction in the following way:

In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know [. . .] there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world. The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination—and the laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality—but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us. (25)

Supernatural events disrupt the normal laws of our existence in fantastic novels or stories and create a moment of hesitancy in readers. In fantasy the world that is constructed is accepted as an other world, free from the natural laws of our own. There is no hesitancy on the reader's part, but rather whole-hearted acceptance and a willingness to pretend that the events and characters in a fantasy novel or short story *do* happen and *do* exist in another realm distinct from that of the reader's.

8 See Stableford pp. ix-lxv for a more complete discussion of Tolkien's contribution to fantasy literature.

9 For a relatively comprehensive history of fantasy in the English language world, see Mathews' *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* and T.A. Shippey's *Magill's Guide to Science Fiction and Fantasy Literature*, v. 1. To my knowledge, no such summary of fantasy literature written in Spanish exists.

CHAPTER II

La torre vigía: A Fantasy Debut

In 1971 Ana María Matute published *La torre vigía*, and by doing so she revealed an entirely distinct narrative mode from her previous novels grounded in social realism for which she became so renowned. *La torre vigía* is narrated by a posthumous protagonist who tells us his story of becoming a knight during an archaic and barbaric age, and this story spans a period of time from when he is six until he turns sixteen. At the end of the novel, on the eve of becoming a knight, the protagonist dies at the hands of his brothers.

In this chapter I will explore how Matute uses fantasy fiction, and furthermore, why she is using this mode of fiction, as opposed to realism, in *La torre vigía*. The novel belongs to the mode of fantasy because it situates us in a world removed from our own, both spatially and temporally, and because the reader recognizes that the events and characters of the novel are impossible. I will discuss the relationship of the protagonist in *La torre vigía* to his family, to other principal characters, and to his environment in order to demonstrate how this novel exemplifies the mode of fantasy. I will ask if the protagonist is confined to the ordinary laws of nature and whether or not his actions make him superior or inferior to others and to his surroundings. In addition to analyzing

these relationships, the reader's connection to the text will be investigated to determine how s/he is encouraged to enter into a pact of "let's pretend," which is essential to a fantasy novel. Finally I will discuss how this other world in which the protagonist lives can comment on contemporary reality and why the mode of fantasy can be particularly strategic in accomplishing such commentary. Ultimately, I will show that this text can be considered Matute's first full-length fantasy novel and that it paved the way for a new wave of fantasy in her writing.

Matute's clear departure from her previous body of work drew the attention of several critics when *La torre vigía* was published. Ruth El Saffar sees the novel as both a psychological and geographical search for a sort of Eden, or a place of harmony in which Good and Evil no longer have any meaning. She argues that although many classify the novel as pessimistic and existentialist, Matute has created a visionary work. The underlying drive to transcend Good and Evil ultimately manifests itself, even though the protagonist is not able to sustain his vision to the end since he is a victim of fratricide. José Kubayanda sees the novel as an allegorical work in which the protagonist embodies abandonment and becomes a symbol of protest, regeneration and hope. He also notes that the invented and autonomous world in *La torre vigía* is a reflection of contemporary reality. While symbolism and the dream-like quality of the novel are at the forefront of Patrick Collard's analysis, he also remarks how the events in the life of the protagonist become more meaningful when studied together with the emblematic meaning of the numbers of the chapters. Matute's apocalyptic vision and motifs are investigated by both Kathleen Glenn and Janet Pérez. Glenn studies the etymological derivation of the word apocalypse and intertwines this approach with her

analysis of similarities between the novel and the Book of Revelation. She also studies the dualistic nature of *La torre vigía*, which she considers an essential element of any apocalyptic tale, while Pérez examines eschatology and contemplates the foreboding “sense of an ending” found in *La torre vigía* and in Matute’s subsequent novel, *Olvidado Rey Gudú*. Pérez also notes the implicit social criticism found in the apocalyptic motifs of both works. To my knowledge, no existing criticism treats *La torre vigía* entirely as a fantasy novel or explores why it can be classified as such, which will be one of the focal points of my chapter. Despite the fact that Matute’s subsequent novels, published after *La torre vigía*, are written entirely in the mode of fantasy, no one has viewed them as an important trilogy and as the beginning of a major new direction in the writer’s literary career, which I intend to do. I believe that her most recent novel, *Paraíso inhabitado* (2008), which features a young woman who intermingles reality and fantasy as she recalls her childhood, will increasingly garner criticism that focuses on why and how Matute uses *fantasy* to address *real* experiences.

Most critics would acknowledge that *La torre vigía* lies on the opposite end of the spectrum of fiction when compared to her previous work of realistic short stories and novels. As I explained in the Introduction, according to scholars of fantasy literature, fantasy is a mode of fiction that belongs on one end of the continuum of literature, with realism on the opposite end; we can determine where a novel resides along this spectrum by examining the relationship of the protagonist to other human beings and to his or her environment. The protagonist’s actions serve to establish whether s/he is superior or inferior to others and to his/her environment, whether s/he is mortal and if s/he can be confined to the ordinary laws of nature. Each of these elements adds more

depth to the classification of fantasy and helps to locate where any given work lies between fantasy and realism.

But fantasy fiction is more than just identifying how the protagonist relates to human beings and the environment; successful fantasy relies heavily upon the reader and the pact s/he makes between the text and the context in which the story is set. In fantasy, the reader realizes that what happens in the text cannot happen in his/her reality. That is, there is no logical explanation that can convince the reader that the fictional events could have happened in his/her daily existence. Critics like Gary Wolfe define fantasy as a fictional narrative that the reader deems impossible because of the nature of the events that take place within the novel (38). Many times the action represents a reversal of our everyday ground rules and is considered to be the “polar opposite” of our own reality (Wolfe 38-39). In order for fantasy literature to be successful, then, the reader must make a pact with the text and allow him or herself to become engaged in an other world. As John Irwin phrases it in *The Game of the Impossible*, fantasy requires something more, “an act of credence” (66). In these other worlds, we witness the “unknowableness of life” and imagine the existence of places such as the Garden of Eden, although they are not located within our physical grasp (Armitt 5).

In my dissertation, I define fantasy, among other things, as the creation of an other world believed to be impossible by contemporary readers. In addition, in order for a work of fantasy to be successful, the reader must enter into a pact of credence, but the author must also create characters, a situation, and a tone that convince the reader that the creatures and occurrences exist within this alternate universe.

Before delving into the analysis of *La torre vigía*, I would like to provide a brief summary of the plot in order to foreground certain scenes that will become critical to my discussion. The novel is told through the memories of a nameless, dead protagonist who recounts his life from the age of six to sixteen and ends his narrative on the eve of his knighthood in the service of the crude but powerful Baron Mohl, a great ruler who reigns over an expansive territory. At the beginning of the story, we understand that we are reading the memories of the protagonist, which form a rough patchwork quilt of his life. The gaps in his recollections are caused by visions of events from the past and future that flash before him. As his memories unfold, we first journey with the protagonist through his years spent in the village with his cold and callous family, and later to Baron Mohl's castle where he trains to become a knight. The novel ends with what seems like an out-of-body experience as the teenager posthumously describes his own death at the hands of his three brothers, who also serve the Baron.

The story takes place during a barbaric, primitive age with no specific geographic or temporal reference. Matute creates a fictional universe filled with gothic elements such as a remote and isolated landscape, unrefined and sadistic characters, and enclosed and decaying spaces. The nameless narrator informs the reader that he was born in the Great River during the annual wine harvest that is celebrated by the entire village and later he describes his family and the feelings of displacement among them and between them and the other villagers.

His father is old and poor, and he manages some of the land that belongs to the Baron. The nameless father is suspicious of the narrator's kinship to him, and although the protagonist eventually favors him in appearance, the father never accepts him. The

protagonist shudders at the thought of being like his father and wonders if he shares the same violent nature as his father and other men in his family. His parents' marriage is far from ideal; his father has mistresses and the mother is more a disciplinarian than a nurturer. Before the protagonist turns eight years old, his mother leaves the family to live in a hermitage and is never seen again.

The narrator's brothers have dark eyes and dark hair in contrast to the protagonist who is fair-haired and has light eyes. He and his brothers constantly fight, even over food, while his father appears to delight in their antagonism. The family is not loving or nurturing, and like the memories that are pieced together by the protagonist to form the story, the members of his family seem to form a unit by chance instead of by choice.

As the protagonist grows older he has only one meaningful relationship. Krim-Guerrero, a noble warrior, is his first *maestro de armas* and teaches him to value noble combat, to love his horse and to respect his enemies. Other than his interactions with Krim-Guerrero, the narrator generally spends his time alone. On one occasion, however, the protagonist befriends and shares his food with a young beggar who ultimately steals his knife and leaves the protagonist feeling betrayed.

Most of the story consists of his recollections in the Baron's castle, but the first vivid memory takes place on the protagonist's sixth birthday when he and his mother attend the public burning of two women who are accused of witchcraft. This important scene will mark the protagonist for life, since it is at this moment that the world seems to divide into good and bad, dark and light, black and white. Years pass without much comment from the narrator until the annual wine festival, when he turns thirteen and

must leave his home to be trained as a knight under Baron Mohl, just as his brothers before him. He does not see his mother or father again and later he learns of his mother's death.

Upon arriving at the Baron's castle, the protagonist again meets his brothers who had begun their apprenticeship some years prior. When the young boy arrives at the castle, the Baroness orders that he be instructed in the arts, learn to read and take lessons in math and geography. He also learns etiquette and becomes a skilled cook. The Baroness treats the young boy like a privileged squire, but she also seduces him and continually has sex with him throughout the three years of his apprenticeship. When the Baroness seduces him, she turns into an ogre, as depicted by the narrator. He later learns that the Baron shares the same non-human form as the Baroness. Despite the fact that he is afraid of the Baroness, the protagonist eventually grows to love her. Her body is later found in the river and it is not until the end of the novel that we discover that the protagonist's brothers killed her, as evidenced by the fact that one of the brothers wears her ring.

Baron Mohl also treats the protagonist as a favored apprentice, but his kindness is matched by the cruelty that he shows the narrator. Midway through the novel, Baron takes a young male prisoner of war as his slave, and chains him to his bed like a dog. He sexually abuses the boy, but the nameless young slave purposefully kills the Baron's pet falcon, and he is consequently mutilated, stabbed and thrown to the dogs to be eaten. However, the reader later learns that the slave belonged to Baron's Mohl's enemy, Count Lasko. Unaware that the Baron has already killed him, the Count

demands that the young boy be returned unharmed. The Baron eventually battles and kills Count Lasko.

Meanwhile, Count Lasko's army comes to challenge Baron Mohl, but before they go to battle, a monk arrives to tell Mohl that Lasko's relatives attacked a monastery within the Baron's dominion. The Baron immediately names the protagonist a squire and gives him the Baroness' horse. Feeling as though he is called, the protagonist goes the following day to the watchtower. When he climbs to the top of the tower he meets the watchman, who is as young as the protagonist and has a disfigured face with bright eyes. The watchman informs the narrator that he has been waiting for him and proceeds to reveal his visions of a great battle and the ensuing end of the world. He says that as the end draws near, the protagonist will be faster, more alert and more powerful than anyone else. Later the protagonist tells the watchman that he recognizes him as the young beggar with whom he shared his bounty and who stole his knife, but the watchman only shakes his head as if he does not understand him and never confirms his identity.

The protagonist returns to the castle and the Baron, who now refers to him as a son, informs him that once he is knighted, the young narrator will be sent to his best fortress to become the Prince and Angel of War because of his many merits. Over the next few days, the protagonist returns several times to visit the watchman who tells him of more visions of the "Gran Combate" and the subsequent apocalypse.

The soon-to-be-knight returns to the castle in preparation for the ceremony of his investiture. As part of the ceremonial rites, he must take a ritual bath meant to cleanse his spirit and purify his body. Afterwards, he is presented with a new sword and dressed

in a white shirt, a black *cota*, and a red cloak, which symbolize purity, death and blood. The other knights escort him to the chapel where he is left alone and he sheds all of the garments with which he was adorned. The following day he leaves the castle and heads toward the Great River where he was born, but he is met by his brothers who kill him. After he dies, he floats above his body and looks down upon his decapitated head lying in his own blood, but his narrative continues. He concludes that the watchman either died or fled but he does not know exactly when. What follows is a description of a great battle in which Good and Evil both die. In his final words, which are the closing lines of the novel, the narrator-protagonist says that he can be heard during the wine festivals and during some rainy afternoons.

While many readers may be surprised at Matute's shift from realism to fantasy, she does not abandon her hallmark themes. In *La torre vigía* she revisits the motifs that are found in most of her novels and short stories: alienation, lack of communication, betrayal, the separation between the child adolescent and the adult world, social inequities, and the oppression and exploitation of the weak. However, it is the mode in which these themes are couched that sharply distinguishes *La torre vigía* from her previous work. As my dissertation intends to prove, Matute increasingly turns to fantasy to deliver many of the same messages that she has been conveying since the beginning of her career. She uses a different narrative vehicle to deliver her hallmark themes in a more imaginative setting, as compared to her earlier short stories and novels of social realism. With fantasy, Matute does not ask the reader to suspend his or her feelings of disbelief; she calls for us to abandon them and plunge wholeheartedly

into an alternate reality that pushes the boundaries of that with which readers may or may not be entirely comfortable.

As mentioned earlier, I will analyze the relationship of the protagonist to others and to his environment to determine why this novel is considered fantasy. In *Anatomy of Criticism* (1957), Northrop Frye, following Aristotle, believes that just as we can be enlightened by the relationship of one *novel* to another, so can we better define a work of fiction when we study the dynamic that exists between the protagonist, the other characters and his/her environment in order to deduce if s/he is superior or inferior. Frye explains that typically in fantasy we find the following: the hero is identified as superior to other humans and to the environment, but s/he is still considered a human being and not a god. The hero's actions are supernatural, yet s/he is still a mortal; the ordinary laws of nature are suspended and non-human creatures such as ogres and talking animals populate the environment (Frye 33). When we consider Matute's protagonist in *La torre vigía* and study the relationships between him and his environment and between him and the other characters, we can say that this novel uses fantasy rather than mimesis. He is superior to the other characters because he is not confined to the ordinary laws of nature; his actions, when compared to those of the other characters, are morally superior; and he is viewed, even by the other characters, as superhuman because of his prophetic qualities—he is a “chosen one.” Therefore, according to Frye the superior relationship that the protagonist maintains with regard to his surroundings and to others firmly places this novel in the mode of fantasy.

Although our protagonist is a human being, his actions go beyond the laws of nature as we know them because he transcends time. He is not confined by a temporal

enclosure because after he is murdered, his story continues from a removed and impossible vantage point. That is, after he dies he looks down on his own inert body and continues his narration. He says, “ De alguna forma, me vi inclinado sobre el agua, que se tiñó de rojo. En el centro de aquella sangre vi, flotando, mi cabeza degollada” (249). The entire story is told from beyond the grave by the same voice that has been narrating the entire story. This posthumous narration lends him a supernatural quality.

His double position—that of being dead, yet continuing to tell his story—reveals that time occurs on more than one plane for the protagonist. The first is a mortal plane, or the chronological progression of time marked by the events that occur in the protagonist’s life as he grows from a young boy into an adolescent. We understand that there is a linear sequence of time as evidenced by the maturing main character. But there is a second temporal dimension in which the protagonist exists outside the mortal understanding of chronological time; he also exists in the time of memories—memories of events that have already taken place and those that have not yet occurred. That is, at the end of the novel we discover that he has been narrating his story posthumously and that we have been reading his recollections. His memories largely contribute to the asynchronous existence that leaves him in a kind of temporal limbo because many of them, especially those that the protagonist has not experienced, lack any kind of chronological order; he is unable to decipher if he is remembering something that actually occurred or if his memories are from a time that has not yet taken place. He says, for example, “Y, de súbito, tuve conciencia de que yo conocía o había conocido tiempo y tiempo atrás (más allá del firmamento o río sin orillas hacia donde caía, como ave alcanzada, un nombre de niño) aquella misma vendimia, y aquellas mismas voces”

(20). He suffers constantly from visions, both of events that he senses he has already lived and of events that are yet to come. As one example, when he witnesses a dragon devouring warriors in the Great River, he realizes that this event actually took place in a distant time, but he is unable to decipher whether this occurred in the past or is from a time that he has not yet lived. As another example, when he leaves his home to become an apprentice under Baron Mohl, he comments, “me pareció que por la primera vez, a través de aquellas ramas, se me ofrecía la total y absoluta visión de la vida y del mundo. Y que en su resplandor yo persistía y renacía continuamente: y aún más eran parte de mí mismo” (67). We begin to understand that he is superior to his environment in that he is not bound by the restrictions of linear time. He exists simultaneously in many temporal dimensions or spaces.

Because of the impossibility of this happening in our own reality, we accept this novel as an example of fantasy. Though a human being, the narrator possesses abilities that go beyond a human’s abilities. Even though he exists after death, his memories from a previous life or from a time he has not yet lived stay with him, leaving the protagonist to feel as though he is continually reborn. The fact that the protagonist exists on various planes of time—chronological time and the time of memories—accentuates the mode of fantasy in the novel. Also, the fact that the protagonist posthumously narrates his story once again demonstrates that what is impossible in our world is made possible in a fantasy world.

Other characters also recognize that this young boy is somehow extraordinary which, in combination with other factors, places the text further from realism, as I will explain. Like a messianic figure, the nameless protagonist is marginalized from birth.

His own family emotionally abandons him and the village inhabitants treat him as an outcast. After he turns seven, he goes to the nearby creek and describes his reflection as *horroroso*, noting that the people in the village run from him. He says, “De nuevo fui a mirarme en el agua y me hallé—como entonces—tan sucio, desgarrado y raposuno que pocas ganas tuve de repetir la experiencia [. . .] Siempre fui muy feo: cara de zorro, nariz aplastada, y tan rubio el pelo que a todos causaba extrañeza, pues, al sol, parecía blanco” (43). However, like so many prophetic figures, the outcast is also the chosen one, a person who is above and different from all others, who later sacrifices himself for a greater good and who delivers a message.

Despite the young boy’s arresting appearance, Baron Mohl discerns a divine-like quality within the young protagonist, suggesting that he is from an ancient or mythic time, and he mentions that the narrator’s blue eyes and blonde hair are like their ancestors or “los dioses perdidos” (122). Within him lies a godly heritage that distinguishes him from the others who inhabit his earthly realm. José Kubayanda notes that the narrator is like a sacred being who, by the end of the novel, has socially, physically and morally become a kind of spiritual superman (335, 341). But when the young protagonist encounters the watchman near the end of the novel we understand his extraordinary quality. When the boy first meets the watchman, we learn that the watchman has been waiting for his arrival and knows that the protagonist comes from an unknown time and place (202). The watchman reaffirms the superior status of the protagonist when he says that the apprenticed knight will be more intelligent, more observant and more formidable than anyone else at the time of the “Gran Combate.” He foresees that the narrator’s life will reproduce itself in a thousand new forms and that he

will exist in a time that is not comprehensible according to the laws of the world that he currently inhabits. The young boy acknowledges his own peculiar existence when he admits that he has recollections of both the past and the future. He observes, “Para mí, había muerto el mundo de los guerreros y de los alquimistas, de los vagabundos, de los ogros, de los navegantes, de los dioses; mi vida ya era una parte de las infinitas formas de un tiempo sin límites, ni murallas, ni cercos espinosos” (215-16). The message of Matute’s novel begins to emerge, much like the watchtower that stands out above a land of destruction and brutality. It is a message heralded by a human being who experiences no boundaries in time and who is cognizant of alternate temporal planes beyond the limitations of his world.

The tower is positioned at what seems to be the end of the world, and symbolically it is the place where the protagonist is enlightened about the inevitable apocalypse that approaches. The watchtower is the triumph of humanity, the ability to surpass the baseness of the world and rise above it. It is here that the young hero becomes aware of the nature of his world and that we discover his purpose or intended message. He says, “Y supe que el mundo estaba enfermo de amor y de odio, bien y mal: de forma que ambos caminos se entrecruzaban y confundían, sin reposo ni esperanza” (214). When he witnesses, at the age of six, how night turns into day and day becomes night, he realizes that triumph and truth are never black or white. All opposites collide to become gray. The watchman confirms this realization several years later when he remarks, “veo una sombra que intenta apoderarse de otra sombra, y que en verdad es la misma, como si la sombra blanca y la sombra negra penetrasen la una en la otra, y al fin llegaran a confundirse” (212). All opposites will eventually join to

become one at the end of time, as foretold by the watchman. Good and Evil will both perish, but the narrator will remain. The watchman prophesies that the world will be the triumph of man and that the narrator will be at the center of it all. He says:

El fin del mundo es el triunfo de los hombres: una victoria más brillante que ninguna luz conocida. Y esa victoria alcanza al universo entero, y forma parte de una inmensa esfera, que jamás empieza y jamás termina. Hay ahí más luz que toda la luz de esta parte del mundo. Y en el centro estás tú, con las tinieblas bajo los pies, y sin muerte: pues eres la imagen contraria del mundo. (207)

As predicted by the watchman, the young protagonist will survive the apocalypse and remain, like a messianic figure who never dies. The narrator is more than mortal and therefore, because of his position vis-à-vis other beings, the novel is considered fantasy.

Just as the young boy is not limited by the physical and temporal restrictions of his environment, and just as his messianic quality places him above the other characters, so too does his morality. When he dies, the world is reversed and the literal images are substituted with more abstract visions. The ground and the castle walls disappear from his sight, but the encroaching battle of Good and Evil is not the only one of significance. The other is the earlier battle that he faces when the Baron orders him to kill his brothers. Despite the cruel treatment that he has received from them all his life, however, he does not want to murder his own kin. However, if he disobeys the Baron, he may lose great favor with his master and be exiled from the castle.

In *La torre vigía*, Matute continues her tradition of using Biblical motifs by recalling one of its most famous parables as a parallel to the protagonist and his brothers, which ultimately elevates the status of the narrator. This is not the first novel in which Matute uses Biblical allusions both to express her cornerstone themes of betrayal and alienation and to offer additional layers of character development; several of her short stories and novels are peppered with references to the Bible. As Margaret E.W. Jones notes, the story of Cain and Abel is Matute's model for love-hate relationships and other references to the Old Testament and the modernization of Biblical characters frequently surface in other works. In *Los Abel* (1948) the Cain and Abel theme is introduced for the first time in the form of fratricide and it doubles as a metaphor for the Spanish Civil War. In that novel the conflict occurs when the two eldest brothers fight over the same woman and the ownership of family land. As Pérez observes, Matute characterizes the brothers in opposite terms. Aldo, one of the two brothers, is "brusque, ascetic, rigid, hardworking, and potentially violent, while [the other brother] is irresponsible, charming, seemingly happy and full of life" (*The Fictional World* 98). The opposition later resurfaces in Matute's *Primera memoria* (1960) in which Manuel is the Abel of the story and Borja serves as the Cain counterpart, eventually framing Manuel for a crime that he did not commit. Manuel also symbolically represents the son of God, who is innocent but assumes the blame for stealing money from Doña Praxedes. Borja, his antagonist and the grandson of Doña Praxedes, is literally referred to as a "pequeño Pilatos" (151) by Matia, Doña Praxedes' granddaughter. Borja later lives up to this nickname when we discover that he stole the money, yet he betrays Manuel and falsely accuses him of the crime. *La trampa* (1969) and *Fiesta al Noroeste* (1952) also deal

with betrayal vis-à-vis the Cain and Abel theme. Other allusions to the Old Testament can be found in *En esta tierra* (1955) when Pablo Barral, the protagonist and leader of his people, serves as a modern version of Moses (Jones, “Religious” 416). Jones cites an interview in which Matute said that she used Biblical references in her works in order to raise social consciousness:

Elegí la literatura como el medio para mí más idóneo y eficaz de comunicar a los hombres mi idea de ellos y de decirles mi solidaridad en su dolor de vivir. Fatalmente, pues, he escrito . . . novelas desagradables para los paladares burgueses o esteticistas. . . A la par que un documento de nuestro tiempo y que un planteamiento de los problemas del hombre actual, [la novela] debe herir . . . la conciencia de la sociedad, en un deseo de mejorarla. En cuanto a mi relación con los lectores, mi propósito es obligarles a pensar. (“Religious” 418)

The conflict and tension between the narrator and his brothers in *La torre vigía* gives reason for pause if one recalls the Old Testament story of Joseph and his brothers. In this case the narrator is Joseph, while his brothers represent Jacob’s other sons. The protagonist’s older siblings are jealous of his privileged place in the castle when he becomes like a son to the Baron and a favorite of the Baroness. Baron Mohl commands the protagonist to commit fratricide, but on the eve of becoming a knight, the protagonist is murdered by his own family. While the brothers are fighting each other, the protagonist glimpses the familiar ring once worn by the Baroness, and he realizes that his brothers were responsible for her death. Despite the fact that his brothers murdered the Baroness, whom he had grown to love, and despite their attempt to take

his life, the protagonist grows to be a hero in this grim story of betrayal and cruelty by choosing not to kill his brothers as ordered by Baron Mohl, even though he knows that they will kill him. He becomes a morally elevated figure and a martyr for Matute's message of self-sacrifice. That is, instead of obeying Baron Mohl, his conscience guides him to choose Good over Evil and love over hate. He allows himself to be slaughtered by his brothers even though his fighting skills are superior to theirs.

El Saffar also comments on the narrator's conscience and sees it as the place in which an apocalyptic battle initially arises. She writes, "Y es dentro de la conciencia del narrador/héroe de *La torre* donde Matute presenta los comienzos de la lucha apocalíptica entre las fuerzas de la luz y las de las tinieblas lo que aquél llama 'el Gran Combate'" (227). The narrator can conceive of a better world than the cruel and violent one that he experiences daily. As El Saffar observes, "Al fin de la novela, vemos con más y más frecuencia oscilar el protagonista entre creer en su torre de visiones o en la vida de envidia y maldad que lo circunda" (227). Although the watchman relays visions of peace and reconciliation to the narrator, the protagonist is not able to see these visions or to fully believe in them. Instead, he believes that "ni el Bien ni el Mal han satisfecho, que yo sepa, a hombre alguno" (251). Good and Evil cancel out one another, and love is the only truth that remains. Upon realizing that his brothers killed the Baroness, the narrator experiences an epiphany and says:

Y a pesar del terror que me invadía, una verdad abrióse camino en tan febril y lúgubre esplendor: pues, como vuelo blanco entre las brumas de la noche, como el guerrero que asola y destruye más allá del odio,

aleteaba esa palabra—todavía más ciega—que llaman los hombres amor. (198)

It is love that ultimately causes him to deny his master and allow his brothers to live. Love, then, is the only truth that moves beyond the dichotomies of darkness and light, good and evil, and can be found in everything and everywhere. This truth, delivered by the messianic outcast, becomes clearer as the young protagonist approaches knighthood and prepares to leave his childhood behind. The young boy sacrifices himself in choosing not to kill his brothers, despite the cruelty they showed him throughout his childhood. The protagonist resembles Joseph in this manner. Like Joseph, the young narrator pardons his brothers and does not seek revenge. He chooses forgiveness rather than vengeance, and by doing this he denies himself the honor of becoming one of the Baron's knights. Paradoxically, it is the most honorable act of the novel.

By refusing to follow in his father's footsteps, the protagonist demonstrates another way in which he is morally superior to the other characters. When he leaves home to become trained by Baron Mohl, the protagonist says:

De nuevo mi padre me llamó. Esta vez, para despedirme. Se le habían enconado las úlceras y supuraban un jugo amarillento y pestilente. Los jorobados que solían portarle restañaban aquella miseria, y se me hacía insoportable respirar el aire corrompido de la estancia. Me resultaba totalmente repulsivo aquel despojo humano que me llamaba hijo. (63).

His mother is also repulsed by the man she married and is determined that her son not become him. In order to learn the nature of punishment, she takes the young boy to see

the public burning of a mother and daughter, and she warns him, “Eres salvaje, malcriado y feroz como tu padre: pero ten por seguro que he de inculcar en tu mollera, aunque sea a mamporros, el respeto a las buenas costumbres y el temor de Dios o moriré en el empeño” (17). While the mother judges her son for being like her husband in temperament, ironically the father rejects the narrator when he is an infant because the latter does not favor the former physically or temperamentally. The narrator is treated like an orphan and is ridiculed by the men in his family; even though he grows older and eventually takes on the physical characteristics of his father, he is never accepted.

This initial question of figurative inheritance marginalizes the young boy from birth, as does his unusual appearance. Yet, despite the acknowledgement that he is considered grotesque even at a young age, he knows that his moral code sets him apart from his brothers and his father. He has never killed anyone and does not kill animals that he will not eat, contrary to the common practice of his father and brothers who hunt and kill for pleasure rather than necessity. As another example of the protagonist’s kind and compassionate nature, he encounters a hungry young boy and shares his food with his new friend, even though the protagonist does not have much to share. The starving boy, whom the narrator regards as his only ally, ultimately leaves the protagonist and steals his only knife. The protagonist considers this theft and abandonment to be the first sadness of his life, rather than the fact that his family never shows him love or affection. His ability to love and show compassion for others, despite never having received the same in his childhood, places him above the other

characters. He is never taught to share or care for the weak, yet his humanitarianism makes him better than the rest of the characters, including the Baron and Baroness.

One might also challenge the notion that a poor, uneducated boy could be viewed as either superior or noble. While they should stand for the highest moral and ethical standards, ironically, the Baron and Baroness actually represent a refined sort of malevolence that disguises their crude physicality, and the narrator gradually discovers that the supposedly lofty figures are actually ogres whose general comportment corroborates their inhumane acts. Although the Baron eventually treats the protagonist like a son, he is also guilty of chaining a young war victim to his bed and sexually abusing him. The Baroness provides another example of less than noble behavior when she consistently has sex with the young narrator shortly after he arrives at the castle, but she also allows him privileges that no other squire receives. This gap between the idealized behavior that might be expected from nobility and what is uncovered here leads the protagonist to become disenchanted by what he sees and experiences. He recognizes that lofty, chivalric values are not demonstrated by his master, the Baroness, or by the knights who serve the Baron. Inside the walls of the castle, he sees a world turned upside down, replete with sexual abuse, violence and social injustice. Perhaps the narrator represents the greatest contradiction in that he comes from humble beginnings, but in the end we learn that he is the most noble, even divine, character. If we return to Frye's categorization of fiction, we can state that the superior relationship of the protagonist of *La torre vigía* to the environment and to the other characters, along with his superior morality, places this work well within the mode of fantasy.

We can argue that the novel is written in the mode of fantasy, but the question of how an author can successfully engage his/her reader is another question entirely, especially when the exotic temporal and spatial setting would seem to complicate any kind of relationship between the reader and the text. Matute accomplishes such engagement through her lyrical style, through the narrative structure of the novel, and through the introduction of taboo topics. I will also address how the setting reinforces the connection between reader and text, rather than alienating him/her.

The success of a fantasy novel does not rest entirely upon the shoulders of the reader; the author must do his or her part to invite the reader into the text. Part of what draws the reader into the other world that Matute creates is her lyrical prose style, which softens the hard edges of such a brutal world. While Glenn attributes a cinematic quality to *La torre vigía*, due to the black and white images, I would argue that these same images lend poetic value to what could have otherwise made the text inaccessible to the reader. Matute's narrative style is befitting of an innocent and inexperienced young boy who grows into an insightful and expressive adolescent and whose remembrances are poetic in nature. His recollections are charged with sensation, smell, taste and visuality, all of which create a human connection between the reader and the other world described by the narrator. For example, when the protagonist recalls the scene in which the women accused of witchcraft were burned to death, he describes the moment in vivid, sensory detail:

Así distinguí el mísero contraste que ofrecía la ancianidad de aquel ser con el insólito nido de vello rojo (tal que el mismo fuego que se aprestaba a devorarla) bajo su vientre; resaltaba allí de modo tan singular, que

apenas si pudo extrañarme la avidez de las llamas que prestamente lo prendieron. Fue lo primero que ardío en ella. El viento inmóvil que yo distinguí claramente, se desató. Un múltiple rugido brotó de las raíces de los árboles, y creí partiría en dos la tierra. Lo primero en abrirse fue el vientre, grande y seca fruta que ofreció la extraordinaria visión de sus entrañas, encrespadas en una blanquísima y grasienta luz: tan blanca como sólo luce el relámpago. Mas no uno, sino mil relámpagos se habían detenido allí. Y un olor denso y vagamente apetitoso invadió el aire que respirábamos y se introdujo tan arteramente en mi nariz [. . .] En aquel instante el viejo odre se estremeció de arriba abajo y pareció que iba a derretirse, como manteca. Tomó luego los colores del atardecer, negreó sobre sus bordes abiertos, fue tornándose violeta. Aquí y allá se alzaron resplandores de un verde fugaz y crepitante. Al fin, convertido enteramente en árbol, con llameantes ramas en torno a un calcinado tronco se deformó. (23-24)

This sophisticated passage evokes numerous sensations of smell, sight and sound. Like a hungry beast, the fire is personified and devours the accused with voracious speed. Flames make a spectacle of the burning by changing from red to white to violet to black and back to white. Similes heighten the visual display by transforming white light into lightning, and proliferation serves to emphasize the speed at which the burning occurs, as not just one lightning bolt, but a thousand flash before the narrator's eyes. Texture is introduced by way of synesthesia when a heavy, greasy feel defines the light that envelops the woman's entrails. The disintegration of flesh, which is compared to

butter on the verge of melting, not only gives a clearer depiction of the scene, but also serves to layer more texture into the passage by adding onto the greasy description of the light. Also, the image of butter on the brink of changing from a solid to liquid allows the reader to better imagine the speed at which the flames consume the body.

Corporeal metaphors serve to illustrate what the narrator sees. Human flesh is united with the flesh of the tree when the old woman's stomach, described as a large, dry fruit, deteriorates as the flames consume her body. The human form and the tree are intimately intertwined. Later, the protagonist refers to the scene as a "humano árbol de fuego," a powerful metaphor which further meshes the two entities into one as the woman's limbs turn into branches of fire, giving off a dense smell that is somewhat appealing. Instead of the woman's bodily trunk, composed of head, arms, and torso, what remains of the human tree of fire is an ashy white, charred tree trunk. A scene that could otherwise be brutal and alienating becomes one of the most beautifully written passages of the novel. The harshness of the event is softened by way of the metaphor of the tree that captivates, rather than repels, the reader.

The narrator's description of the wine harvest early in the novel reveals a similar poetic sensitivity:

Un olor acre y violento me llegó, entonces. Olor humano y bestial a la vez, que despertaba un dormido dragón en los más ocultos ríos de mi vida.

Alzóse entonces el animal solitario, de ojos iracundos, vi cómo levantaba su cabeza de oro y sangre por sobre las anchas hojas de las vides, entre los granos de uva como enormes gotas de una lluvia encarnada, transparentes y espesos a la vez, que llenaban los cestos. Una luminosa

y transparente savia manaba bajo el lagar, y caía en el recipiente de madera. Pequeños ríos de un oro rojo y encendido como el sol a la hoguera corrían sin tino ni prudencia hacia la tierra. (56-57)

The wine harvest becomes a sensually charged passage much like the description of the burning of the old woman. Smell is the first layer of sensuality that we encounter and synesthesia adds a violent quality to the description. A mix of human and beastly smells awakens a dragon with angry eyes that serves to embody the state of intoxication produced by the massive consumption of alcohol. Wine becomes equated with blood as it is spilled over the grape leaves and pushes through meaty, thick grapes that fill the basket. Texture is layered into the narration when the liquid that pours out of the press is heavy like sap, recalling the consistency of blood, as it falls into the wooden receptacle. The simile of the liquid flowing like little rivers without judgment alludes to the indulgent nature of the wine harvest. This passage draws the reader into this yearly ritual through images that are charged with sensuous metaphors and similes.

Similarly, the way in which the brutal environment surrounding the castle is described by the narrator manages to engage the reader because of its lyrical style:

Cuando el viento del invierno se enfurecía y cargaba contra los muros del Castillo, en verdad que estremecía. Nada era el viento de nuestra tierra—protegida por el recodo del Gran Río, a cuyo amor se extendían los viñedos de mi padre—comparado a este otro viento, que envolvía y aun parecía, a veces, dispuesto a arrancar de cuajo almenas y torres.

Levantaba la nieve en blancas polvaredas, tan ligeras como plumas. (99)

Visual imagery paints a beautifully destructive scene as the powerful wind, personified because of its anger, sweeps across the landscape. Although the fierce wind is capable of devastating the tower and battlements of the castle, the poetic quality of the passage mutes the wind's coarseness, as Matute metaphorically transforms snow into dust clouds. A simile comparing snow to falling feathers also assuages the effects of the wind and attributes a light and airy feeling to the scenery. The description of wintertime aids the reader to better imagine what the protagonist encounters through images that add feeling and emotion to nature.

This world and the events beyond the Great River described by the narrator depict an unsympathetic and punishing environment, but one that has layers of sensations. Several black and white images throughout the novel add a cinematographic quality to the narrative, according to Glenn, but it is the use of synesthesia, metaphors, similes, and other poetic tropes that ultimately gives the reader access to a landscape which would otherwise be two dimensional or ineffective at convincing the reader to play along. All of this encourages a human connection with the reader by making the impossible imaginable. Passages filled with sensory details that involve smell, sight, sound and touch help to bridge the gap between the other world found in the pages of Matute's novel and the reality of her readers.

Matute's prose style is not the only element that strengthens the pact with the reader; the world described by the narrator ultimately prods the audience to become absorbed in the text, losing him/herself in fantasy. The setting of *La torre vigía* portrays a savage and unfamiliar land, with a huge river inhabited by a dragon and elves that live along the river's edge. Baron Mohl's cold and dark castle is surrounded by a thick, black

forest that resonates with mysterious cries from unknown creatures. Beyond the dunes that constitute another border of the Baron's dominion, the landscape appears infinite with an equally limitless horizon. When the protagonist enters Baron Mohl's territory, he comments on the existence of creatures that are between humans and beasts, between being divine and coming from the depths of the hell that lies beyond the Great River. It is a territory framed by snow that forms the great dunes of an isolated fortress, disconnected from the rest of the world. The setting takes us deeper into an imaginary environment because we see it as a singular domain that becomes more and more unrecognizable. Perhaps the unknown compels us to continue reading until we discern that the narrator is approaching a land from which he likely will not return. The vast border provided by the river marks an undeniable threshold and guides us into another layer of a fantasy world in which the reader must accept the inconceivable. Past the Great River, only the impossible exists and nothing else, which makes this fantasy world believable. That is, the "other world" created by the writer becomes the *only* world. This new world is a universe entirely on its own. As Armitt states, fantasy creates worlds that are outside the horizon of our own existence instead of being located within that boundary (5). In *La torre vigía*, the reader discovers a world that represents the "unknowableness of life" and, like the Garden of Eden, as Armitt notes, we can imagine the existence of places such as the realm of Baron Mohl, although none of us is able to travel there. Therefore, as readers, we must accept this world and enter into a pact of "let's pretend."

The temporality of the novel is just as ambiguous as the physical setting, which only underscores the dimension of fantasy and prods the reader to engage an alternate

universe. Within Baron Mohl's realm, the narrator feels caught in a time warp in which he belongs both in the present and in the past. On the night of his perilous journey to Baron Mohl's castle he has a vision of the endless passage of time, night colliding into day, day eclipsed by night. Like travelers approaching a black hole, we are gradually pulled into this time warp. On the final morning of the narrator's journey, he reaches the Great River and sees a watery reflection of Baron Mohl's castle. The mirror image reveals to him a world turned inside out and emptied of all meaning. It is an upside down world, as he states when he arrives at the Great River : "Y entonces, invertida en las aguas del Gran Río, distinguí la silueta y las torres del castillo de Mohl. Por un instante creí presenciar, en el misterioso e incansable fluir de las aguas, cómo el mundo se vaciaba y volvía al revés"(68). Time and space fluctuate like the waters of the Great River, which contributes to the feeling of infinity conveyed by the realm beyond the river. Once he is closer to the castle, he describes the landscape and says:

Hacia la estepa, tras las dunas, el mundo parecía infinito y a menudo lo observaba yo con inquietud y deseo mezclados. Amaba tanto las planicies como los árboles y la caza. Y si torpe fue mi educación en cuanto a maneras cortesanas y señoriales, no así mi vida solitaria en los bosquecillos y praderas que rodeaban el pequeño dominio paterno. (78)

Many of Matute's juvenile characters find solace within the forest and the protagonist of *La torre vigía* is no exception. In chapter three we will see how the forest once again become a refuge, this time for the protagonists of *Aranmanoth*.

Matute's lyrical prose and setting function to captivate the reader, as does the narrative structure. Todorov states that all fantasy narratives possess a certain structure that begins with a stable situation, but the interjection of the supernatural into fantasy serves to disturb, alarm, or simply keep the reader in suspense (162). There is always a stable situation at the onset of the narrative with characters that form a certain configuration. The arrangement among characters may shift slightly but ultimately it remains intact. Later, if something supernatural transpires, it causes a disequilibrium to occur, or some sort of transgression. Equilibrium must then be re-established, but once that stability is regained, it is different from the stability at the beginning of the narrative. Todorov explains that elementary narratives include an episode of equilibrium followed by an episode of disequilibrium. All narratives, according to Todorov, include this schema in one form or another. For example, a child lives with his family and belongs to and participates in a micro-society with rules and regulations (equilibrium). Eventually, something happens which causes the child to leave the home (disequilibrium). In the end, the child returns to the family and equilibrium is re-established. However, the narrative is not as it was in the beginning: the child is now an adult and the relationships among family members have shifted. Without an event that destabilizes the narrative, no laws are transgressed and the fantasy narrative becomes immobilized (Todorov 165).

Similarly, the structure and the transgression of laws in Matute's narrative play important roles in drawing in the reader. While not all laws are broken by means of a supernatural intervention, I will argue that physical or moral laws are broken and therefore mobilize the narrative, which holds the reader's interest. If we recall Todorov's

basic analysis, *La torre vigía* follows thusly: a boy lives with family in micro-society (equilibrium). The boy is forced to leave home to become an apprentice under Baron Mohl (disequilibrium). The boy is accepted and excels in his new environment (equilibrium). He discovers that his brothers killed the Baroness (disequilibrium). Up to this point in the narrative, there is no real supernatural act that produces disequilibrium. However, the boy's murder by his own brothers at the end of the novel supplies a supernatural intervention: we discover that the narrator is telling this story posthumously, which continues to mobilize the narrative and engages the reader until the very end.

The first occurrence that activates the narrative, according to Todorov's schema, is the protagonist's departure from his home to travel to Baron Mohl's castle. The setting changes from one locus to another, attracting the reader's attention. The journey is perilous and we worry that the protagonist may not survive or that he may encounter real danger. Equilibrium is re-established when he crosses the Great River, safely arrives at his new home, and soon becomes the Baron and Baroness' favored apprentice. The next action that destabilizes the narrative is when the protagonist discovers that his brothers murdered the Baroness. Equilibrium is achieved after the Baroness' death when the narrator forms a relationship with the watchman who counsels him as he reaches his destiny, in keeping with the watchman's prophecy. Later, he continues his success as an apprentice and on the eve of his knighthood, the protagonist's murder by his brothers serves to undercut the stability of the narrative and presents the final act of disequilibrium. One expects the narrator to murder his brothers but the reader is surprised by the outcome: the narrator is killed, yet the *story* does not

die. To further elaborate on this final act of disequilibrium, it is necessary to analyze the configuration of the characters, specifically the narrator and his two brothers.

From the beginning, we discern that the relationship between the protagonist and his siblings is not one of antagonism; there is no conflict between protagonist and antagonist. Rather, we have a case of the underdog—three against one—which only underscores the alienation of the main character. The three older brothers are pitted against the narrator from the beginning; their behavior and values resemble those of their father while their youngest brother is initially ignored because the father doubts his legitimacy. The older siblings are even taught to fight one another for food, leaving the younger protagonist with whatever is leftover. The three brothers are not separate allegorical figures that represent certain characteristics such as greed, jealousy or vanity. Instead, they form a collective bully, which positions the narrator as the underdog. By appearing weaker and by being excluded from the fraternity shared by his siblings, the narrator garners the sympathy of the readers. However, such a position works perfectly to destabilize the narrative: once the young protagonist apprentices under Baron Mohl his role shifts and he becomes favored among the Baron's young squires. He is superior to his brothers in skill and strength, and he is the Baroness' lover. These factors would not be deemed relevant or significant had the protagonist been in a direct duel with a singular sibling; if that were the case, the reader would simply label each character as villain or hero, as is the case with most fairy tales.

Within Baron Mohl's castle, the power begins to shift and the protagonist becomes stronger and more skilled in contrast to his much weaker position with respect to his brothers at the beginning of the novel. We root for the underdog, and we want him

to succeed in his quest to become a knight. The initial arrangement of characters has not changed, but there is a shift in power. As a result of being favored by both the Baron and Baroness and being more adept in his training, the protagonist is now more powerful than his brothers. The fact that he does not kill his brothers, despite Baron Mohl's orders, is crucial. First, it is surprising that the narrator is able to forgive his brothers after a lifetime of mistreatment. Secondly, when the brothers murder the protagonist, the narration is mobilized. While fratricide is not considered a supernatural act, the aftermath of the murder is a supernatural intervention that destabilizes the narrative. A transgression of the laws of physics takes place when the narrator continues to tell his story posthumously, thus compelling the reader to make sense of the narrative. That is, when the novel continues, despite the fact that its narrator dies, the reader is actively engaged in putting the pieces together. Where does the narrator reside on a life-and-death continuum? This is perhaps the strongest test for Matute's audience; at the end of the novel, the game of "let's pretend" is won, and the reader must actively form some sort of conclusion, which moves the novel back to equilibrium.

The transgression of the laws of physics makes the narrative process dynamic in *La torre vigía*, but the transgression of what is *prohibited* is key to what holds the reader's interest. When we transgress these limits, we enter into the realm of the taboo, which is permitted in fantasy. Geraldine Nichols states that one of the characteristics of fantasy is its very origins in ancient taboos. She notes, "Common cultural prohibitions such as those forbidding intercourse between the living and the dead, and between certain family members, are regularly transgressed or tested under the cover of fantasy, giving rise to such classical fantasy themes as the un-dead, vampires, necrophilia,

ghosts, and such forth” (116). In *La torre vigía* the taboo subjects of the life-and-death continuum, metamorphosis and bestiality challenge the audience to plunge further into the darker side of fantasy, even though s/he may not be entirely at ease with such topics. According to Nichols, fantasy serves to disturb, disquiet and alter our “perceptual grids, the wanton erasure of frontiers and hierarchies [. . .] the un-limiting of limits” (109). The limits violated or transgressed in what Todorov calls “pure fantastic” literature are those dividing life from death, “real” from unreal or supernatural, the replacement of a symbiotic unity with alterity, and permission from prohibition in the sexual or behavioral realms.

The death of the narrator transgresses the physical laws as we know them, presenting us with a taboo that unsettles our perceived notions of mortality. However, it is not death itself that is perceived as taboo, but rather the parallel states that death and life hold in the same temporal space. When the protagonist dies at the end of the novel and his narration continues, the reader has to wrestle with the coexistence of life and death. Matute’s fantasy world transgresses the perception of life and death by placing them on a continuum with no real limits. When we realize that from the beginning of the novel the narrator has been telling his story posthumously, death is envisioned as being contiguous to, rather than succeeding, life (Nichols 116).

The way in which Matute plays with the words on the page, recreating this life-and-death continuum, allows the reader to actually see the transgressive move. The closing lines of the novel, for example, make the transition from the corporeal to the incorporeal, mimicking the protagonist’s death. They read:

Pero yo alcé mi espada cuanto pude, decidido a abrir un camino a
través de un tiempo en que

Un tiempo

Tiempo

A veces se me oye, durante las vendimias. Y algunas tardes, cuando
llueve. (252)

The gradual disappearance of the words on the page mirrors the slippage of the narrator from one time into another. The sentences are no longer complete; his thoughts lose their structure, forming a fragmented persona and asking the reader to question the resulting state of limbo.

This technique has been widely used by Matute, especially in earlier works such as *Los niños tontos* (1956), but she incorporates ellipses instead of fragmentation in several of the short stories that comprise the book (Nichols 115). When the protagonist of *La torre vigía* dies, the literal disappearance of the narration may be unnerving to most readers, especially those “trained in hermeneutics, eschatology and other Western metaphysical doxa” (Nichols 116), because the reader is not certain of the outcome. If this same voice that has been narrating the entire story from the first page should naturally die along with the physical death of the narrator, the reader might become unsettled. How can he be dead and alive in the same space? How can this voice be heard sometimes in future wine festivals and some afternoons when it rains, as cited above in the last lines of the novel? What is taboo engages the reader. Matute tests the limits of the relationship between life and death and offers another alternative, such as the life-and-death continuum previously discussed.

The dual characters of Baron and Baroness Mohl introduce another taboo when their perceived metamorphosis challenges our notion of unity. Jackson explains why metamorphosis is taboo and says, “When clear distinctions between male and female, animal and human are blurred, or inverted, so-called normal perceptions are undermined and ‘realistic’ ways of seeing are subverted” (49). The Baron and Baroness cannot be both human and beast; they cannot be one and then become the other, but fantasy permits this sort of alterity. When the Baroness changes from human to ogre in front of the narrator her eyes turn yellow, her nails become sharp like a falcon’s talons, and her teeth become pointy and razor-like. The limits of what we perceive as possible are breached when she turns into an ogre. This is precisely one of the ways in which fantasy can be more flexible than realism. The author, as well as the audience, can experience boundless creativity and test his/her beliefs and values. As Jackson observes,

Metamorphosis, with its stress upon instability of natural forms, obviously plays a large part in fantastic literature for this reason. Men transforming into women, children changing into birds or beasts, animals interchanging with plants, rocks, trees, stones, magical shifts of shape, size or colour, have constituted one of the primary pleasures of the fantasy mode. (81)

Sexual pleasure surfaces as another taboo in fantasy literature and in *La torre vigía*. Both the Baron and Baroness transgress the limits of what is perceived as possible by shifting between human and beast, but with their sexual appetites they also breach what is commonly permitted in most cultures. The Baroness seduces the narrator for the first time when he is just fourteen years old, and the Baron uses a young

male prisoner of war as his sex slave. The moral implications here may challenge cultural perceptions of what is permissible or even normal. The way in which the Baroness seduces the protagonist is terrifying. Her nails scratch his skin until he bleeds, and her teeth bite and tear at his flesh. Because the protagonist controls the narrative focus, there are no explicit passages describing what takes place during the sexual encounters between the Baron and the boy that he takes as prisoner. Nevertheless, the fact that the Baron chains the boy to the foot of his bed and never allows him to leave his chamber make the unseen even more horrific.

A taboo is breached when one realizes that the human protagonist repeatedly has sex with a beast when he engages in intercourse with the Baroness who is also an ogre. But Matute makes bestiality bearable and discomfits her readers when the relationship between the protagonist and the Baroness becomes tender. He begins to love her instead of despising her. Matute makes a detestable situation into something desirable. She un-limits the limits of reactions that initially alienate the reader in order to ask the reader to increase his or her tolerance. Can we justify the Baroness' continual sexual transgressions if the protagonist grows to care for her? Can we excuse the Baron's abuse of the young prisoner of war if he treats the protagonist as a beloved son? These complex issues push the boundaries of what is tolerable and what is not. Regardless of personal opinion, taboo subjects effectively demand that the reader put aside his/her notions of what is deemed possible or impossible, acceptable or unacceptable, and s/he consent temporarily to new rules in an alternate reality.

Fantasy literature, given its freedom to experiment with a variety of limits, also functions to show us "the edges of the real" (Jackson 23). Matute may be testing

tolerance, but ultimately she uses fantasy as a means of social commentary. Nichols observes that

Anyone who has read Ana María Matute's fiction could vouch for her profound commitment to the cause of human justice and equality. In her realist fiction, such as the novels *Primera memoria* and *Los hijos muertos*, she repeatedly traces and rejects the rigid divisions among class, economic, gender, race, generic, political, and regional lines which have characterized Spain; she uses fantasy in the same way.

(113)

La torre vigía points to the “edges of the real” through the novel’s nearly apocalyptic ending and in so doing Matute conveys a particular social message.

According to Jackson, fantasy texts sustain an allegorical or retrospective relationship to the “real.” That is, fantasy and realism can both be modes that define the “real” but each will differ vastly in the expression of that which is examined (Jackson 43). *La torre vigía* maintains a tangential relationship to the “real” by means of its apocalyptic nature. As readers we sense that the degenerate world in *La torre vigía* is doomed when the protagonist experiences an apocalyptic vision of a Great Battle that is to come and when he senses that the end is at hand. When the clairvoyant watchman who presides over the tower tells the protagonist of A Great Battle in the future and that the end of the world will be the triumph of humanity, the novel recalls the Book of Revelation in the Bible, also known as the Apocalypse of John. Matute’s apocalyptic fantasy novel is fraught with metaphysical battles, monsters and symbolic numbers. Other apocalyptic elements involve the allegorical battles between the forces of Good

and Evil that occur within the conscience of the youthful hero/protagonist, between the armies of Baron Mohl and his enemy Count Lasko, and in the visionary prophecies of the watchman. Many elements of contrast and duality appear throughout the novel, which further denote its apocalyptic nature.¹ The protagonist perceives many contrasts: black and white, dark and light, good and evil, positive and negative. At the age of six, when his mother takes him to witness the public burning, he notes that from that moment on, the world was split in two:

Tan sólo quedó el fuego, recreándose en cárdenos despojos, allí donde otrora alentaba tan sospechoso espíritu. Y me pareció entonces que la noche se volvía blanca, y el día negro; cuando, en verdad, no había noche ni día sobre las viñas. Sólo la tarde, cada vez más distante.

De este modo, asistí por vez primera al color blanco y al color negro que habían de perseguirme toda la vida y que, entonces, creí partían en dos el mundo. (24)

Color and behavior suggest a world filled with opposition. Baron Mohl has a black horse while the Baroness is blonde and rides a white horse. The protagonist and his brothers provide another example of contrast in that the narrator is light-haired with light eyes while his brothers are dark-haired and have dark eyes. The protagonist himself is a contradiction if we consider that this ugly, unwanted outcast becomes the most prized of the squires and is celebrated as a divine-like figure. Images of opposition intensify as the “Gran Combate” draws near. Barbarians attack a monastery and replace the statue of a white angel with an image of the Prince of Darkness and the watchman’s prophetic vision reveals the collision of black and white worlds. The watchmen foretells of black

horsemen who invade the prairie as white warriors march to meet them, black steeds wander in lost kingdoms, branches tremble in the jungle and the depths of the ocean shake (221).

In the apocalyptic tradition the forces of Good defeat the forces of Evil and a perfect age is heralded for an eternity through the resurrection of the dead (Pérez, "Introduction" 9). But Matute's *La torre vigía* cannot be considered an exemplary apocalyptic novel since there is no final salvation, as Glenn observes (27). The novel does not end with total destruction and also finishes far short of the eternal utopia prophesied after an apocalypse. Instead, it appears that an age comes to a close when the story concludes with a dead narrator and a universe on the verge of an apocalypse.

In the face of such a pessimistic vision filled with conflict, one must wonder why Matute does not take advantage of the conventions of fantasy and instead present us with an escape into a world of optimism. With each page of *La torre vigía* the setting becomes darker and seemingly further removed from our reality. For example, if one were to trace the introduction of fantastic elements as they appear in the novel, there would be a sharp increase in the number of supernatural events midway through the novel when the protagonist crosses the Great River into Baron Mohl's territory. Each chapter reveals new fantasy elements such as the discovery that the Baron and Baroness are ogres, the proliferation of dragon sightings and the existence of ghostly armies that seem to rise straight from the ground. In spite of the supernatural elements, might this grim tale offer any meditation for the reader? At the end of the novel, the watchman prophesies, "y esa batalla se repite, y continúa, en la sangre de todos los amaneceres, de todas las furias solares; se repite y se reanuda sin posible fin" (221).

The voice of the narrator will also continue every year. After the protagonist dies, he says, “A veces se me oye, durante las vendimias. Y algunas tardes, cuando llueve” (252). The last line of the novel clues the reader in to the possibility of an ending that will repeat itself. Like the wine festival that occurs every year, his voice will be heard over and over again. It is no coincidence that one of the protagonist’s first memories, which he shares at the beginning of the novel, also constitutes his final words when he states that his voice will be carried in the wind during the wine festival. The story comes full circle in the sense that it begins and ends with the mention of the wine festival. The details of the wine festival and the rain show that the story will be born and that it will die again and again; Matute takes advantage of the seemingly limitless bounds of fantasy only to fold the novel back on itself with a narration that closes all other dimensions of time and space and leaves no room for a happy ending.

Although the setting seems to be far removed from our reality, the novel may offer a commentary on our world vis-à-vis the quasi-apocalyptic ending. Nichols states, “Matute’s fiction conforms to Scholes’ definition of fabulation which is ‘fiction that offers us a world clearly and radically discontinuous from the one we know, yet returns to confront that known world in some cognitive way’” (113). *La torre vigía* and the other world that is constructed therein suggest an attitude towards reality when we compare events from the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century with those that take place in *La torre vigía*. As Pérez notes, “20th Century history offers not only the millions of victims of the Nazi holocaust and millions more slain by Stalin, but more recent genocide in Africa and Bosnia, innumerable victims of multiple Spanish American dictatorships from Argentina and Chile to Nicaragua, Haiti, and

beyond" ("Introduction" 9). And in the United States, the terrorist attacks of 9-11 and the wars that have followed that ominous day offer several reminders of a less-than-civil world. With the close of the second millennium of the Christian era, millennialism² has proliferated and now we find ourselves living with the ongoing menace of global destruction, whether by nuclear warfare, technology, or environmental catastrophe. Constant predictions of our planet's collision with asteroids and comets or of bombardment by giant meteorites add to the prophecies of doom.³

If we view apocalyptic fantasy as a means of commenting on and perhaps representing the real, then Matute is speaking out against the mistreatment of the weak, the manipulation of the poor, and the inherent cruelty seen in humanity through an alternate universe that is reduced to extremes of privilege and misery, satiation and hunger, hedonism and suffering. She uses a mode of literature that typically has a eucatastrophe, a term coined by JRR Tolkien which refers to the need for a happy ending that produces everlasting joy.⁴ The function of fantasy according to Tolkien is to recover the vision of childhood, and promote liberation from the conventions of reality, and escape the mortal woes of hunger, poverty, sorrow and injustice. For Matute, however, fantasy is a fairy tale for grown-ups, but she does not subscribe to a need for a happy ending. Instead, she utilizes fantasy as another way to investigate, rather than escape, the darker side of the human experience. Perhaps the repetition at the end of the novel serves as a sort of cautionary tale for its readers, suggesting that history will repeat itself just like the battle between Good and Evil. That is, much like the watchman foresees a never-ending conflict and shares this with the protagonist, Matute shares this

same vision with her readers as a warning of what may come if we do not learn from our own battles.

La torre vigía constitutes the first of three novels in Matute's fantasy trilogy. It is the first novel written entirely in the mode of fantasy and it is followed by *Olvidado Rey Gudú* (1996) and *Aranmanoth* (2000). While it is true that Matute has intermingled fantasy and realism in her previous short stories and novels, the significance of *La torre vigía* lies in her abandonment of realism and her wholehearted embrace of the mode of fantasy. The underlying themes that she chooses to explore are consistent, but she changes them into a different form. One of the greatest accomplishments of her first fantasy novel resides in her ability to house her hallmark themes in a seemingly unrecognizable time and place, and to simultaneously hold these themes up as a mirror, or lift them high like a watchtower, for the reader to recognize in his/her own world. Perspective, in part, makes fantasy believable, and the distance between the world Matute forges and our own paradoxically separates us but also unites us. The world turned upside down in the pages of *La torre vigía* could seem right side up if we consider the strategies of fantasy literature as mentioned in the introductory chapter.

Matute paints a similarly grim picture in the novel that she published twenty-five years after she wrote *La torre vigía*. Like the previous novel, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* (1996) takes place in an apocalyptic environment. In Chapter Two, I will analyze the second novel that comprises Matute's fantasy trilogy, and its representation of violence and brutality among kingdoms and families. Set in what seems to resemble the Middle Ages, the story is a dramatic saga about the origination and development of the kingdom of Olar. While the central focus is on King Gudú and his incapacity for love, Matute

resuscitates the Cain and Abel theme found in several of her previous works, but she expands it to include patricide as well as fratricide. Gudu's absolute incapacity to love and the barbarism found throughout the novel highlight the profound lack of humanity, which has a correlation to the end of the second millennium when we consider the ongoing wars and rising levels of hostility all over the world.

While *Olvidado Rey Gudú* and *La torre vigía* differ greatly in terms of their extension, the novels have many similarities that stem from the connection between the chivalric novel and fairy tales. Both texts include dragons, magicians, princesses, sorcerers, fairies, ogres and witches within an exotic, temporally distant world. Each is set in a primitive and savage kingdom and includes frequent references to the apocalypse. As in *La torre vigía*, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* has a strong social subtext that criticizes the subjugation of the poor, the abuse of the weak and the barbarity of humanity.

Although there are many similarities between the first and second novels, there are also crucial differences. *Olvidado Rey Gudú* is told by an omniscient narrator and contains more magical elements, due to the numerous fairies, gnomes, elves, nymphs, sorcerers and witches that populate the novel and have supernatural powers. Also, as a saga it includes hundreds of characters that lack psychological development; even the main characters are marked by an overall lack of individuality. I will investigate how this deficiency along with the increased occurrence of magical events affects the reader and his/her belief in the text and in the ultimate success of the narrative mode of fantasy.

NOTES

1 Kathleen Glenn's article, titled "Apocalyptic Vision in Ana María Matute's *La torre vigía*," explains how dualism is fundamental to apocalyptic writing. She also asserts that the juxtaposition of images lends a cinematic quality to the text. One example of such juxtaposition can be found in the image of dark horsemen riding on a snowy terrain with black shadows trailing behind them.

2 Millennialism is defined by the *New Oxford American Dictionary* as "the doctrine of or belief in a future (and typically imminent) thousand-year age of blessedness, beginning with or culminating in the Second Coming of Christ. It is central to the teaching of groups such as Plymouth Brethren, Adventists, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses or a belief in a future golden age of peace, justice, and prosperity."

3 Janet Pérez looks more closely at the proliferation of Hispanic millennialism and apocalyptic events of the twentieth century in her "Introduction: Hispanic Millennial and Apocalyptic Literature."

4 Richard Mathews explains in *Fantasy: The Liberation of Imagination* that Tolkien views fantasy as a means of providing consolation for its readers in the form of a sudden joyous turn that leads to a happy ending. This is the eucatastrophe, or good catastrophe, which offers a "fleeting glimpse of Joy, Joy beyond the walls of the world" (Mathews 57).

CHAPTER III

Olvidado Rey Gudú: From Quests to Fairy Tales and Recovering the Forgotten through Fantasy

Best known for her novels and short stories based in social realism, Matute surprised many of the readers familiar with her previous fiction when she published *La torre vigía* in 1971. Although Matute was an extremely prolific writer prior to the publication of *La torre vigía*, twenty-five years passed before she published her next novel, *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, in 1996. Also written in the mode of fantasy and consisting of more than 700 pages, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* became a runaway bestseller and appealed to a new generation of fantasy buffs. Set in what seems to resemble the Middle Ages, the story is a dramatic saga¹ about the creation and development of the Kingdom of Olar, and the action of the novel occurs in a violent and primitive world. The central focus is on King Gudú, but Matute also highlights his mother Queen Ardid as a central figure.

One might wonder why Matute waited so long before publishing *Olvidado Rey Gudú*. In part, the sheer extension of the novel may explain the span of time between publishing dates, but when compared to *La torre vigía*, it is obvious that during her reprieve between publications, Matute formulated an even more complex fantasy novel.² In the previous chapter I addressed the elements of fantasy found in *La torre*

vigía. In this chapter I will discuss different hallmarks of fantasy that characterize *Olvidado Rey Gudú* and make it unique from, although connected to, its predecessor.

Her second fantasy novel is far from a formulaic reproduction of the novel that she published in 1971, and I believe that this is one of the reasons that more than two decades passed before she released her second fantasy novel. In this novel, Matute broadens the scope of her fantasy repertoire by incorporating and developing the quest motif and the fairy tale. In addition, the conclusion of *Olvidado Rey Gudú* is apocalyptic, like that of *La torre vigía*, but the ending of the novel more explicitly criticizes humankind by showing the ill effects of war, greed and power through the protagonist's downfall and the inevitable destruction of his empire.

In this chapter I will again discuss how and why Matute uses the mode of contemporary fantasy. Like *La torre vigía*, Matute's *Olvidado Rey Gudú* belongs to the mode of fantasy because it places us in a world in which time and place are unrecognizable, and because we acknowledge the impossibility of the events and characters of the novel. Like the protagonist and the supernatural characters in *La torre vigía*, who do not pertain to the ordinary laws of nature, the characters and events that we encounter in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* reach beyond what the reader may deem possible. On the first page, though, we notice the first sharp contrast between the two novels. While *La torre vigía* is told by a young and nameless protagonist who gives us access to that other world solely through his eyes, through the omniscient narrator of *Olvidado Rey Gudú* we gain greater insight into the thoughts and actions of several generations of characters. Queen Ardid and her son Gudú receive most of the narrative attention as their intentions, undertakings and voices take center stage throughout the novel.³ As in

the previous chapter, I analyze the relationship between the protagonist, his environment and the other characters in accordance with Frye's classification of the hero, which allows us to situate any given novel along the spectrum from fantasy to realism. In contrast to *La torre vigía*, however, I will be building on Frye's theory in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* by using the quest to illustrate the protagonist's superiority in relationship to the other characters, thereby placing the novel within the mode of fantasy. In the previous chapter we noted how Matute's lyrical style and narrative structure engaged the reader in a pact with the text, but in *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, the incorporation of fairy tales nudges the reader to play along. As I showed in *La torre vigía*, the pact between the reader and the text, solidified in the apocalyptic ending, enables Matute's audience to view fantasy as a commentary on contemporary society. In *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, Matute uses Gudú's insatiable thirst to conquer new territories and the interminable conflicts between family members to complement the apocalyptic conclusion of the novel, producing a complex platform for her critique on war and the pitfalls of humankind such as cupidity and our preoccupation with political power.

Although *Olvidado Rey Gudú* was one of the most popular novels at La Feria del Libro de Madrid in 1997 in terms of sales, and although it is highly revered by fantasy aficionados in Spain, no one has yet shown how the novel pertains to the mode of fantasy or how it fits as a second book in Matute's fantasy trilogy.⁴ Several websites are dedicated to the novel, which reflects a general appeal that might not have taken root with *La torre vigía*.⁵ Alicia Redondo Goicoechea's *Ana María Matute* (2000) includes *Olvidado Rey Gudú* in its sweeping chronological look at Matute's life and works prior to the publication of *Aranmanoth* in 2000. Redondo Goicoechea does not examine the

novel in depth, but she does offer a summary in which she notes that many critics view the novel as the sum of all of Matute's previous literary works and as a testament to her enduring talent. Janet Pérez includes a brief analysis of the apocalyptic elements in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* in her article titled "Apocalipsis y milenio, cuentos de hadas y caballerías en las últimas obras de Ana María Matute." She observes that the dividing line between good and evil blurs and that *The Book of Revelation* from the Bible is present in the form of invasions, war and destruction. According to Pérez, both *Olvidado Rey Gudú* and *La torre vigía* have a social subtext that criticizes the exploitation of the weak, the oppression of the poor and human cruelty ("Apocalipsis" 45).

In addition to the aforementioned discussions of fantasy, Diana Diaconu analyzes the topic of love in "El amor en *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, de Ana María Matute." She studies the many facets of love that are expressed in the relationships among different characters and argues that Matute takes advantage of the novel's length and sheer volume of characters to create a varied case study of love. Diaconu organizes the relationships in the novel into the two main categories of pure and impure love, and she concludes that love and childhood are ways in which one may access creativity, poetry, authenticity, purity and happiness (65).

The novel begins with the story of Margrave Olar, a fierce warrior who inherits a tremendous amount of land and converts these territories into a newborn nation. Olar's son Sikrisio expands the kingdom, which is later ruled by Sikrisio's son Volodioso, who invades the enchanted territory to the South of Olar and executes its ruler and his entire family, with the exception of the ruler's only daughter Ardid. At the age of seven, she tricks Volodioso into marrying her and becomes the first Queen of Olar.

When Ardid matures, she gives birth to Gudú. However, Ardid places a spell on her son as vengeance for Volodioso's numerous extramarital affairs. She curses Gudú with an absolute inability to love or to cry so that he may become the most powerful king to ever rule Olar and may never fall prey to carnal weakness like his father. When Volodioso dies of old age, Gudú becomes king. When he is older, he marries twice, but each marriage is a failure. After his second marriage ends, Gudú's obsession with new conquests overwhelms him. His entire reign is marked by rigorous aggression, invasions and wars, but he will not be content until he accomplishes his ultimate goal of conquering the Steppes, a mysterious territory that lies just beyond both the Great River and the Eastern border of his kingdom.

The central conflict of the novel, the quest to overtake the Steppes, spans several years and Gudú finally vanquishes the fearsome region after numerous battles. He suffers a near fatal wound while capturing Urdska, the Queen of the Steppes. She pretends to fall in love with her captor and becomes his queen as part of her plan to wage a civil war against him in revenge for conquering her land. At the conclusion of the novel, Gudú survives the uprising waged by Urdska but becomes gravely ill. By this time all of Gudú's children have died, erasing his lineage and leaving the badly injured old king alone to await his death. Forgotten by his own subjects, the once great king is left to witness his empire in ruins.

Because *Olvidado Rey Gudú* is such a complex and extensive novel, a genealogical tree and a map preface the narrative. The tree identifies the five generations of characters who form part of the royal lineage, starting with Count Olar and ending with King Gudú's children: Gudrilkja, Gudulín, Raigo, Raiga, Arno and Kiro.

On the page facing the tree we are greeted with a detailed visual picture of the Kingdom of Olar and its surrounding territories. Before the novel commences, Matute provides the tools needed to navigate the fantasy world that readers are about to enter. The tree names all of Gudú's relatives, but at first glance we also learn that there is an impending end to the dynasty, as indicated by the few remaining branches that stem from Gudú's name. In addition, each king's name is shaded in grey, beginning with Margrave Olar and ending with Gudú. Therefore, we are also immediately aware that none of Gudú's children will inherit the throne and that Gudú is the last king of his lineage. Just as the branches delimit the royal dynasty, the map on the facing page also demarcates the kingdom. However, because cartography is at once expansion *and* contraction, the map defines the boundaries of Olar but our imagination allows the fantasy kingdom to lift itself off the page.

In addition to the map and the genealogical tree, which act as guides to the other world of the Kingdom of Olar, the names of the territories and characters that appear on the map and the tree also ground the text with a Nordic setting from approximately the tenth century.⁶ In an interview, Matute states that the tenth century served as the basis for the Kingdom of Olar ("Yo me he caído de alguna galaxia"). When we consider the surname of the Count who founded the fictitious kingdom, we may recognize Olar as a derivation of the Old Norse name *Óláfr*, and in Norwegian *Olaf*, which, maybe not coincidentally, is also the first name of Norwegian King Tryggvason I whose dynasty spanned from the tenth to the eleventh centuries (Logan 31).⁷ The fictional País de Los Weringios in the novel, which lies southeast of the central ruling seat of the Kingdom of Olar on the map that prefaces the narrative, forms another Nordic parallel. The

Varangians, which in Old Norse is *Væringjar* and *Wærgenga* in Old English, were Vikings who traveled eastwards and southwards in the ninth and tenth centuries through what are now Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. Due to the similarities in spelling between the Old English *Wærgenga* and the novel's "Weringios," we may presume that Matute's inspiration for this territory comes from the Varangians (Noonan 135). During the tenth century, Varangian was a term that also referred to the Scandinavians in Eastern Europe who penetrated the interior of European Russia, which was comprised of the entire area between the Arctic and Black seas and between Poland and the Ural Mountains of Russia. The Steppes in the novel, a region that appears in the northeast corner of the map and the object of Gudú's quest, may also correspond to the steppes of European Russia, which was a main geographic-economic zone during the ninth and tenth centuries (Noonan 136).

While the map that prefaces the narrative corresponds to a Nordic model, Matute's nomenclature of the characters in the novel also reveals a Nordic inspiration. In addition, the medieval setting also reminds us of the allegorical texts of that time in which the names of characters have a direct relationship with the behavior or type of character we encounter. In *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, when we investigate the origins and/or meanings of the names on the genealogical tree and in the text, the novel becomes rich with added allegorical significance that engages the reader's intellect and in some instances creates satire. As an example, the title character Gudú is a derivation of *Guð*, meaning "God" in Norse mythology (Orchard 151). In the novel, Gudú's name foreshadows his reigning supremacy over all other characters and his status as a king with a sacrosanct destiny. In conjunction with Gudú, we learn that the name of Urdska,

Gudú's arch enemy who later becomes his Queen, appears to be a combination of two names of the fates in Norse mythology, *Urðr*, meaning "past," and *Skuld*, meaning "future." The fates were believed to rule the destiny of gods and men (Orchard 169). Consistent with her name, Urdska adversely affects Gudú's (or God's) destiny. After Gudú meets and conquers Urdska, his empire begins to fall into ruins. Moreover, after conquering the Steppes, Gudú discovers an ancient scroll that predicts his union with Urdska.

While the names Urdska and Gudú allegorically foreshadow their destined relationship, the names of Gudú's children Raigo and Raiga may prefigure the end of Gudú and his kingdom if we consider their correlation with the Old Norse word *ragnarök*. In Norse mythology, the term refers to the death of the gods and the ensuing apocalypse, which is characterized by the occurrence of various natural disasters, and the subsequent submersion of the world in water (Simek 259). *Ragnarök* is a compound of two words. The first word in the compound, *ragna*, is the plural of *regin*, meaning "gods" or "ruling powers." The second word, *rök*, has several meanings, such as "development, origin, cause, relation, fate, end." The word *ragnarök* as a whole is interpreted as the "final destiny of the gods" (Simek 259). The similarity between the first word *ragna* and the names Raigo and Raiga may contribute to the quasi-apocalyptic conclusion of the novel, especially given the final submersion of the entire kingdom of Olar under water.

The names Raigo and Raiga also appear on the uppermost branches of the genealogical tree that prefaces the narrative and bears allegorical significance. Their names remind us of the Spanish verb *raer*, which means "to erase" or "to root out." In

the singular first person *raer* becomes *raigo* in Spanish, and in the subjunctive form it becomes *raiga*. When we combine both the Nordic and Spanish meanings of the names, the twins Raigo and Raiga prefigure the extirpation of Gudú's seed as Raigo murders his sister and then commits suicide, and none of his other children survives.⁸

While names such as Gudú, Urdska, Raigo and Raiga may not be allegorically transparent, other character names bear a more obvious significance. For example, Ardid means "trick" or "ruse" in Spanish, which is befitting of how she uses magic to avenge her family's death and tricks Volodioso into making her youngest Queen of Olar at the age of seven. Her name also alludes to a squirrel, or *ardilla* in Spanish, which is reinforced by her physical description, as revealed by Trasco when he remarks that she has the eyes of a squirrel (98). Similarly, because of his sweet and simple disposition, Sikrisio's son is named Almíbar, which means "syrup" in Spanish. While the names of Ardid and Almíbar give us insight into their disposition, some names are satirical, such as Predilecto. His name means "favorite" or even "pre-elected," yet Predilecto is not the king's favored son, nor does Volodioso manage to elect him to the throne.

Other names offer a critique of the noble class. For example, Volodioso may mean "que lo quiere todo y es odioso," which is consistent with his characterization as a womanizer and insatiable conqueror. As another example, Tuso, a colloquial term for "dog" in Spanish, is a Count who plots to betray Gudú and assume the throne. The names of the other noble characters who take part in the plan are equally unflattering. The Soez Princes, Gudú's half brothers and the sons of Volodioso and the Countess Soez, conspire with Tuso to overthrow Gudú. In Spanish *soez* means "dirty" or "crude," which corroborates their base behavior in that the brothers steal, lie, and kill to attain

what they desire. The other co-conspirator in the scheme to take the throne is Tuso's brother Usurpino, whose name reinforces his aspiration to usurp Gudú's kingdom.

In a similar fashion, the use of diminutives may suggest that some characters are insignificant to Gudú. For example, Tontina as the name of his first wife means "little idiot" in Spanish and denotes her trivial existence in Gudú's life. Once she confesses her love for another man, Gudú sends her to be burned at the stake. Afterwards, Gudú shows no signs of grief or remorse because she is inconsequential to him. Equally disposable, Gudú disowns his second wife Gudulina and orders her to return home for her apparent insanity. As another example of how diminutives allegorically represent the triviality of certain characters to Gudú, his own son is named Gudulín or "little Gudú." Although his name resembles his father's, ironically Gudulín's character bears no likeness to Gudú, and the absurd way in which he dies reinforces his insignificance. After Gudulín's death, the narrator states that Gudú never sheds a tear nor feels any pain; he simply returns the child's dead body to Gudulina and does not attend the funeral. In sum, the allegorical associations of the characters in the novel help us to "read" certain characters.

In the case of Gudú, his name initially denotes his supremacy, and his elevated status in relationship to other characters further contributes to the mode of fantasy. Whereas in the previous chapter I analyzed the protagonist according to Frye's theory, Gudú's superiority vis-à-vis the other characters and his environment is best demonstrated by his all-consuming quest to conquer the Steppes and determines why, in part, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* is considered fantasy. Moreover, what make this quest appropriate to a fantasy novel are the traits of the hero who undertakes it. According to

Frye, although the protagonist may be a human being, the more attributes of divinity that hero demonstrates and the more the enemy takes on demonic mythical qualities, the nearer the quest is to myth and conversely, the further away from the mode of realism (187). That is, if Gudú were a god, then we would be reading a myth. But because he is elected by and superior to others, as most notably demonstrated in the quest, the novel pertains to the mode of fantasy. Insofar as Gudú is suitable for an epic fantasy novel spanning seven generations, Matute creates a dynastic hero fit to be the last and greatest ruler under whose reign the kingdom reaches its most expansive state. The quest for the Steppes can only be achieved by a protagonist who is extraordinary and far superior to any other character in the novel. Gudú will never be a victim and he will never be dominated because he represents the fate of an entire kingdom.

Before he engages in the battle for the Steppes, Matute carefully constructs Gudú's character so that the quest becomes the most crucial point through which he demonstrates his supremacy. Much like the map that guides readers before the narrative begins, there are many occasions in which we bear witness to Gudú's superiority; these instances plot a course that leads directly to the quest. The augmentation of Gudú's character begins even before he is born, when Ardid predicts that her son will become the greatest ruler that Olar has ever known and that he will rise above his forefathers, siblings and fellow soldiers. The narrator comments, "Él era el Rey, su madre lo sabía Rey cuando le llevaba en su vientre, aún antes del nacimiento" (570). Despite her knowledge that one of Gudú's three older half-brothers (Predilecto,

Ancio, and Bancio) is the logical choice to succeed Volodioso, Ardid's powerful intuition leaves no doubt that her only son will be the next king.

The way in which Gudú is appointed King also reveals that this child is somehow divinely chosen to rule Olar. Following ancient tradition, Volodioso must choose his successor by placing his hand on the head of whomever he selects to be the next King of Olar. The narrator describes the uncanny event during which Gudú, still a little boy, becomes king:

el Rey levantó al fin la mano y la avanzó, con indudable intención, hacia la inclinada cabeza de su hijo Predilecto.

Pero aún no se había posado en sus brillantes y suaves cabellos, cuando sucedió algo totalmente imprevisto: de bajo las coberturas del lecho, entre las pieles, emergió una cabeza hirsuta, oscura y rizada—que mucho recordaba, en verdad, a la de Volodioso en su juventud—. Y unas torpes manos infantiles alcanzaron una pelota azul que, surgida a su vez del mismo lugar, y dando botes, pretendía huir de ellas. La cabeza del niño se alzó entonces, con tal oportunidad y precisión, que la mano ya casi inerte del Rey se posó en ella. Y en ninguna más. (198)

The last line of the passage above emphatically states that only Gudú will rule. Although his aptly named brother Predilecto was to be the heir to the throne, miraculously Gudú literally rises up to fulfill the destiny that Ardid and the other villagers have seen.

Because the narrator emphasizes the certainty with which Volodioso was to elect Predilecto through his "indudable intención," and Predilecto's inclined head in anticipation of Volodioso's hand, the way in which Gudú is chosen becomes even more

remarkable. He is not the son intended to inherit the crown, but through what seems to be divine intervention, he appears at just the precise moment and location for Volodioso's hand to rest on his head. The narrator also highlights Gudú's resemblance to Volodioso at this very moment by noting Gudú's black curly hair, which recalls Volodioso in his youth. The physical description inserted at such a pivotal moment reinforces the passing of the crown to Gudú.

This passage not only corroborates Ardid's intuition of Gudú's destiny as a future king, it also serves to magnify Gudú; the narrative zooms in on him, and Volodioso becomes de-magnified. The narrative focus returns to Volodioso as he dies, but the focalization of the scene reinforces Gudú's grandeur in relation to his brothers, all of whom anxiously await Volodioso's choice of successor. Moreover, a mere toddler steals the scene from a mighty king, which prefigures Gudú's magnanimous stature as the greatest ruler of Olar. This passage is less about the death of an old king and more about the birth of a new one.

As Gudú matures Ardid instills confidence in him by explaining that Volodioso chose him and that she is preparing him to become a great king. She forewarns him of the battles that he will inevitably face, which, in part, enables him to conquer the Steppes. The adult Gudú remembers that his mother told him the following when he was a little boy: "En el último instante de su vida, tu padre apoyó su mano en tu cabeza, y así fue como te elevó por encima de tus hermanos: no lo olvides nunca, tú eres Rey de Olar, y nada ni nadie debe impedirlo" (591). Ardid teaches Gudú from his infancy onward that love is a despicable emotion and that he is superior to his half-brothers. When Gudú contemplates his own existence, the narrator, focalizing Gudú, proves that

he also knows that he is greater than all the other sons of Olar: “Pero él era, sobre todo un hombre; y este convencimiento, de pronto, desvelaba otra pregunta sin respuesta: ¿Era realmente un hombre un Rey? Había oído decir a su madre, en cierta ocasión, que las mujeres de Olar parían hijos, pero sólo ella había parido un Rey” (571). The other inhabitants of Olar reinforce the distinction between being born a son and being born a king. Gudú becomes increasingly aware that although he is a human being, he will be mightier than all others. The omniscient perspective of each citation declares Gudú to be supreme and offers readers a more totalizing picture of his grandeur. His superiority in relationship to the other characters is more believable given the numerous accounts that he is destined to be king.

However, independent of his mother’s teaching and the villager’s prophetic notions, Gudú will prove that he is physically and politically more powerful than his forefathers and siblings. Despite being born to become a great King, Gudú seeks to demonstrate his kingly authority to the people of Olar through his *actions*, unlike his grandfather Sikrisio who was criticized for never having fought a battle. The act of successfully conquering the Steppes is the most important event of his reign, after a series of several successful campaigns. It raises him above all other leaders and confirms that he is destined to be the most exceptional ruler Olar has ever known, exceeding the efforts of his forefathers. Gudú’s great grandfather Count Olar inherited the land that became known as the kingdom of Olar. Olar’s son Sikrisio expanded the territory but assumed the throne by murdering his own brother. Gudú’s father also acquired new land through various conquests, but he too became king through fratricide. By contrast, Gudú’s election as king follows an ancient and noble process.

Furthermore, although Gudú's forefathers led successful conquests, none of them dared to overthrow the unseen Queen of the Steppes. Gudú alone can accomplish what his predecessors were never bold enough to even attempt.

Before Gudú and his men cross the Great River into the Steppes, the omniscient narrator explains the gravity of the quest that Gudú has undertaken:

Pero ahora no se trataba del enemigo conocido, ni de las pequeñas y escurridizas tribus esteparias que su padre y él mismo habían derrotado. Ahora se enfrentaban al Enemigo verdadero: la estepa, el terror de Sikrisio, el imposible sueño de Volodioso; el Este, el Gran Enemigo Verdadero se abría como una trampa. Y no podía imaginarlo, no sabía. Sólo podía imaginar el inmenso vacío donde acababa el mundo—el suyo—, y donde, acaso, nacía otro muy distinto. (572)

Gudú is superior to other men because he is a king, but the quest makes him distinct from other *kings*—from his forefathers—because his fate promises that he will be the only one in his lineage brave enough to face the unknown. Consumed by fear, Sikrisio never dared to enter the land from which no one had ever returned. Likewise, Volodioso may have expanded the kingdom's borders by conquering the South, but he never imagined invading the Steppes. Recalling the earlier passage, the women of Olar realize that Gudú was born a king, but he was also born for this mission because only he is courageous enough to face the True Enemy, the fear of the unknown. Both Sikrisio and Volodioso were able to identify their conquests, the tribes, but only Gudú will conquer that which is unrecognizable. His desire to conquer the Steppes is greater than his fear of not facing the Steppes, which separates him from his forefathers.

Once Gudú and his army finally enter the Steppes and conquer the Hordes, a phantasmagoric army originating from the abyss at the end of the world literally arises from the earth, and Gudú reveals that he is the only king great enough to ever come face to face with the Steppes. The narrator comments:

De pronto, inolvidable, burmosa, medio oculta en la calina, pero sin duda cierta, esa mañana apareció a sus ojos la imagen de la Isla, y toda su estirpe se puso en pie dentro de él, y le invadió el orgullo de saber que él y sólo él era el destinado a enfrentarse por vez primera a la imagen de una llamada más antigua aún que Olar. (592)

Gudú's calling is greater than the present moment, as the quote above indicates; his conquest began long before he was born and long before the inception of the kingdom of Olar. Gudú not only surpasses the achievements of his predecessors, he also literally embodies the power of all of his ancestors, all of his forefathers. He represents his entire lineage as *The Ruler*, *The King*, the only one fated to conquer the Steppes. The quest, then, also becomes greater than Gudú's lifetime; it transcends Gudú's reign to become an allegorical process that is greater than just one hero.

The structure of the quest also reaffirms his destiny.⁹ As Frye notes, the quest has a threefold framework: "the state of the perilous journey and the preliminary minor adventures; the crucial struggle, usually some kind of battle in which either the hero, or his foe, or both, must die; and the exaltation of the hero" (187). In addition, Frye explains that we also note an importance in order. The hero is either a third son, the third to undertake the quest, or successful on his third attempt (Frye 187). In *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, Gudú is the third king in his line. Corresponding to the pattern of the quest,

Gudú's mission demonstrates all of these characteristics. He and his men embark on a dangerous voyage to reach the Steppes; they engage in a series of painful battles to vanquish the queen; and Gudú will return to Olar with Queen Urdska as his prisoner and display her before the entire kingdom as a trophy that validates his success. Yet, although this quest exemplifies all of the common elements of the motif, it is Gudú and the qualities that he displays that make this quest unique to the fantasy novel when we learn that his story has literally already been written.

Before taking his prisoner Urdska with him to Olar as proof of his victory, he demands that she give him the treasure that is hidden on her island. Unbeknownst to Gudú, the scrolls found within the treasure confirm what has already taken place and what is to come. The revelation assigns to his character even more divinity:

Y encontraron tal cantidad de piedras preciosas, de copas y vasijas de metales raros y joyas nunca vistas, que Gudú quedó deslumbrado: Y además, algo que aún apreció más y que le anonadó: un sinfín de pergaminos y de escrituras donde se narraba la historia de Urdska y su linaje. Perteneía a una antiquísima civilización condenada a desaparecer. Y allí se decía que él, Gudú, sería el esposo de Urdska y que de ella tendría dos hijos, hermosos, crueles y valientes, a los que nombraría sus sucesores. (600)

Up to this point, Gudú has been prophesied to be a great King and destined to be the only one of his line to enter the Steppes. While defeating Urdska in his quest for the Steppes proves that he is superior to his forefathers and all other men who have tried to conquer the territory, the scrolls testify to the prophetic forces that have guided him

toward the Steppes. If there were any doubt that Gudú was meant to be the only son of Olar to enter the Steppes, it is erased at the moment when Gudú reads his own name on the buried scroll. He is intended to be united with Urdska. We discover that while the Gudú intuits that he is destined to vanquish the Steppes, the story narrated on the scrolls seals the notion that he is the sole ruler whose fate is intertwined with that of the Steppes. While the scrolls do not specifically unite Gudú with the fate of Urdska's civilization, they foreshadow the apocalyptic ending that concludes the novel.

The long journey to find the Steppes also demonstrates Gudú's superiority over his environment. The narrator's representation of time in the quest emphasizes the length of the journey and showcases Gudú's will to persevere until his mission is complete, despite the hesitation from his men. If the quest were not perceived as arduous and painstaking, then there would be no climax in the novel. Without a great obstacle for Gudú to overcome, the novel would be a sweeping epic without drama. It is essential, then, that the quest be prolonged so that it becomes the defining event of Gudú's reign.

The quest is drawn out over three main stages which lead Gudú and his army from the Kingdom of Olar to the Great River, then to the island in the center of the river, and finally into the heart of the Steppes. The mission will last for years but Gudú never falls victim in battle nor is he weakened by the harsh climate that each season brings. Because the novel is a saga, we have a grasp of the number of generations spanned. However, the velocity of time is often vague except for the occasional cues given by the narrator.

We do not know how many days pass between the departure of Gudú and his men from Olar and their arrival at Big Arm, the first phase of the quest, but we are aware that “El verano avanzaba lento y poderoso” (592). During the second phase of the quest, Gudú and his army face Urdska’s army on the island and the next temporal clue reads, “Y el tiempo pasaba, implacable” (594). Two lines later the narrator says, “Pero llegó un día en que, al fin, logró poner sitio a la ciudad” (594). The narrator presents time so ambiguously that it gives the reader the sensation of being caught in a time warp, thereby suggesting that Gudú’s mission is interminable. In some instances the seasons change with the turn of the page and the reader must pay attention to these rapid shifts because with each temporal marker, we are acutely aware that Gudú’s quest is drawn out; only he has the fortitude to persevere whereas most of his troops are wounded in battle or die from a disease, yet he maintains a successful army. Gudú must call for reinforcements several times, but he always remains to fight with his men instead of returning to Olar and allowing one of his captains to manage the battle. His quest is grueling and many lives are spent but he is ultimately successful. As the quest demonstrates, Gudú is human but he bears extraordinary qualities that elevate him over others. He is an invincible king with a sacrosanct destiny that only he is able to fulfill, as evidenced by the scrolls. He is a chosen ruler meant to lead an entire people to greatness and only he can vanquish the Steppes. The quest, then, places him without question above all others who come before or after him.

While the quest affirms Gudú’s superiority and situates the novel within the mode of fantasy, the insertion of fairy tales into *Olvidado Rey Gudú* requires the reader to create a pact with the text, much like Matute’s lyrical style and narrative structure did in

La torre vigía. The allusion to well-known fairy tales in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* prods Matute's reader of fantasy into pretending that the Kingdom of Olar and its magical events exist. Fairy tales remind the reader of a child-like perspective and allow him or her to imagine a place in which the events of the story exist in some alternate reality independent of the Kingdom of Olar, and they invite the reader to play along.

In many interviews, Matute has acknowledged her love of fairy tales and their influence in her work, especially those written by the Grimm brothers.¹⁰ In Matute's *Primera memoria* (1960), Hans Christian Andersen's *The Snow Queen* and *The Little Mermaid*, as well as J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, serve as intertextual references for the protagonist Matia as she recounts her life. What distinguishes *Olvidado Rey Gudú* from *Primera memoria*, however, is that in Matute's earlier novel her characters do not relate their lives through these stories.¹¹ There are clear references to fairy tales, but some of the characters who inhabit Olar also exist in the other world of the fairy tale; the reader accepts that, like the characters and events in fairy tales, anything is possible.

By referencing classic fairy tales, Matute asks us to recall the literature of our childhood.¹² Fairy tales implore us to use our imagination and remember our perceptions of a time when not everything was defined as being impossible or possible. Readers, then, dive into this other dimension of the fairy tale world in which the ambiguity of time and space offers a kinder alternative to death and tragedy. When we read a novel in which love is altogether absent or denied and family members murder each other for power, the fairy tale world within these events lures us back and reminds us that we too can choose to use our imagination to free us instead of becoming paralyzed by death, pain or grief.

We recall the tales we read as children and how easily we accepted fiction as fact, and in doing so we strengthen our pact with the fantasy text. As Zipes notes,

In fairy tales [. . .] the world of reality is left behind from the very start, and the animistic system of beliefs is frankly adopted. Wish fulfillments, secret powers, omnipotence of thoughts, and animation of inanimate objects--all the elements so common in fairy stories--can exert no uncanny influence here; for, as we have learned, that feeling cannot arise unless there is a conflict of judgment as to whether things that have been "surmounted" and are regarded as incredible may not, after all, be possible, and this problem is eliminated from the outset by the postulates of the world of fairy tales.

(172-73)

The convention of the fairy tale requires that we adopt the premises of a world that is not based on our own reality and accept the possibility that, for example, when someone dies, he or she is not dead but may instead be playing a game.

One of the primary fairy tales in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* is that of Tontina, Gudú's first wife, and Predilecto, Gudú's half brother. In this tale, Matute melds Charles Perrault's *Cinderella* and *Sleeping Beauty*, Hans Christian Andersen's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* and *The Little Mermaid* by the Brothers Grimm. Tontina's character is a hybrid of Snow White and Sleeping Beauty. On her maternal side, Tontina is the direct descendent of a princess with black hair and skin as white as snow, and she is also wrongly killed but then resuscitated by a kiss. On her paternal side, one of her ancestors is a beautiful princess who slept one hundred years until she too was awakened by a kiss. Predilecto, Gudú's brother who falls in love with Tontina, also lives

a kind of fairy tale existence in comparison to the other characters in the novel. Predilecto retains an almost child-like innocence, when compared to his father, Volodioso. He is not cynical and still believes in a world with justice for all, as indicated in the following passage concerning Predilecto and a poor old man from the village:

Así, quizá podrás hacer algún bien a gentes como nosotros. Y Predilecto reflexionó:

--Algún día el mundo será justo para todos.

El anciano quedó muy caviloso.

--Puede que digas verdad—exclamó—. Y puede que algún día, en algún tiempo, eso sea posible.

--Todo es posible—dijo con pasión Predilecto--, si queremos que lo sea.

(184)

Predilecto, much like Peter Pan who encourages Wendy and the boys to believe in fairies and teaches them how to fly by thinking wonderful thoughts, has the untainted outlook of an optimist who still believes that change is possible within the kingdom.¹³ It is essential to include a character such as Predilecto in a novel as bleak as *Olvidado Rey Gudú* because he offers hope. When he sees the misery and desperation of the poor people who inhabit the villages, Predilecto swears that if he becomes king one day, he will help them. The old man tells him that he will never be king if that is his intention, which echoes what Volodioso taught his son. The postulates of Predilecto's justice-for-all world read like a fairy tale when compared to the social inequity experienced by the impoverished inhabitants of Olar.

The incorporation of the fairy tale becomes complete when the young Tontina inexplicably enters a coma-like state after kissing Predilecto and dies from her first and last kiss of true love, as foretold by her fairy godmother. However, Prince Eleven, who is a relative of Tontina's, tells Predilecto not to mourn because Tontina is playing a game called Never Ever Return. He explains that she is not dead, she is merely pretending. This revelation marks the clear division between the two worlds: Olar and a fairy tale world in which the inhabitants do not die but instead play games. Naturally, Predilecto believes in Prince Eleven's explanation because, like Peter Pan, he would rather maintain an innocent, child-like perspective instead of subscribing to the absolutes of the adult world.

The primary fairy tale in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* does not end with the prophesied death of Tontina but instead continues with an allusion to *The Little Mermaid*. Lovesick, Predilecto follows the Mermaid who, because she loves Predilecto, has transformed herself to look like Tontina. Predilecto follows her into the lake and drowns. The Lady of the Lake, the Mermaid's grandmother, sends both Tontina and Predilecto off in a sailboat to drift across the ocean. When the Mermaid asks where they are going, her grandmother replies, "Más allá de las regiones de Nunca y Siempre, donde residen los ecos y las huellas de la Luz, y los reflejos engañosos del mundo" (443). Matute's fairy tale also contains a kind of Never Land, the regions of Never and Always, in which Predilecto (Peter Pan) and Tontina (Snow White) may be joined forever in their voyage. Unlike the kingdom of Olar, the fairy tale world provides an alternative to death where forbidden lovers may be together.

The conclusion of the tale reveals more precepts that derive from the fairy tale world and differ from those of Olar. The Mermaid is heartbroken because Predilecto will never love her, and her grandmother removes her memory so that the pain will be forgotten. Although the Mermaid does not recall any specific memories of Prince Predilecto, she remains so sad that her grandmother converts her into sadness itself: “Ondina flotará por todas las orillas del agua, convertida en la tristeza” (444). As a result, sometimes humans in the novel feel a certain emotion that is actually the Mermaid. The narrator explains, “Desde entonces, a veces, llega hasta el corazón de los humanos un sentimiento extraño: recuerdo, melancolía o deseo. Es Ondina, aunque ellos no lo saben, que ronda sin descanso por playas y litorales” (445). According to the principles of the fairy tale world, human emotions such as sadness are explained by the presence of supernatural creatures like the Mermaid, who bear the burden of and actually embody unpleasant feelings. Humans, then, notice a strange feeling, but they may not necessarily experience sadness.

The allusion to *The Little Mermaid* asks readers to believe in yet another dimension of the fantasy world in which what humans may encounter in Olar does not apply to the laws that govern the fairy tale world. In a place in which lovers do not die, but rather are united and float peacefully on the ocean, and in which Mermaids can lose their memories, Matute challenges her audience to rethink the boundaries of Olar. She creates yet another fantasy layer in which magical potions transform supernatural creatures into human form and humans become eternal. In order to accept the logic of the fantasy novel, we must also accept that characters like mermaids and the Lady of

the Lake exist in the fairy tale world, much like we did as children when we believed fairy tales to be true.

The fairy tales in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* not only prompt readers to delve deeper into an alternate world within the fantasy world, they also offer a kinder existence than the one we encounter in Olar. In Gudú's kingdom, there is no room for a love story like that of Tontina and Predilecto, who are only allowed to remain united as lovers in a fairy tale world. The kingdom of Olar is so pessimistic that the fairy tales provide an other world in which the reader may find a reprieve. It is precisely in these fairy tale realms that the Lady says, "Tontina, Tontina: ¿cómo te dejaste nacer? El mundo no es hermoso; nunca habrá un mundo hermoso" (441). The reader clearly makes a distinction between the "world" in which Tontina is killed (Olar) and the one in which she and Predilecto will float forever on the ocean (the fairy tale), and like Predilecto, we can maintain the notion that everything is possible. When the world promises no hope of improvement, we may delve into the world of fairy tales to find a more hospitable alternative in which we may not feel pain or we may forget the cause of our grief.

The representation of time in these fairy tales also challenges our notions of the impossible and forces the reader to pretend a little while longer. In *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, time in the fairy tales is non-linear and personified. Much like in the case of the protagonist of *La torre vigía* who has memories of events that have yet to occur, time is non-linear for Tontina in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* because Time appears as a character to her. When Predilecto meets Tontina, he asks if she knows Time. Tontina replies:

A veces, el Tiempo, cuando teje del revés, me cuenta historias de gente que aún no ha llegado. Y otras, cuando teje al derecho, de gente que

nunca llegará. [. . .] [Príncipe] Once es el menor de los Once Príncipes Cisnes que una malvada Reina encantó. Su hermana, la Princesa Leonor, empezó a tejer para ellos once túnicas de ortigas para devolverles su naturaleza humana, pero el Tiempo le jugó a Once una mala pasada, ya que Leonor no pudo, por falta de tiempo, terminar la manga de su túnica, y anda durante el día con un ala en lugar de brazo. Desde entonces, el Tiempo lo tomó bajo su tutela. Por eso puede montar en su corcel que galopa al derecho y al revés nuevamente. (350)

Time in fairy tales, and especially its personification, assumes an entirely different guise from that of chronological order. It is a game that functions much like a wheel of fortune that moves backwards and forwards and brings luck and loss. We must arrive at the narrative prepared to imagine a new space in which time moves in all directions, including to the left and to the right, as described in the quote above. The characterization of time in the fairy tale world adds whimsy to an otherwise serious novel because we perceive that nothing is permanent or perfect, as with the case of Prince Eleven. When we learn that Eleven has a wing instead of an arm because Leonor ran out of time, we are entertained. The playful use of *time* versus *Time* makes light of Prince Eleven's physical condition, and we do not pity him.

Matute invites the reader to sink further into the land of make-believe and form a pact with the novel by creating another time in which one can remain indefinitely. For example, Tontina dies after her first and only kiss from Predilecto, but Prince Eleven consoles him and says that Tontina is just playing a game. Even when the Lady of the Lake sends Predilecto into the sea, death is not seen as permanent. The Lady reveals

that there is a chance that Tontina will be reborn when she says, “Tontina, Tontina: cuando algún día nazcas—si naces—ya se habrán marchitado todas estas cosas” (441). Recalling the whimsical portrayal of time in fairy tales, when Tontina dies, we are left with hope that maybe one day she will be born again. In addition, because of Tontina’s fairy tale heritage and because she knows Time to be different than the chronological order that governs Olar, we expect that like Prince Once, humanness may return to her.

Like Tontina’s death, the death of Gudú’s son Gudulín provides another example of how life may be possible after death. King Gudú calls Gudulín to join him in the castle and become an apprenticed knight. Only days after his arrival, Gudú challenges his son to a duel in which Gudulín mounts a horse and carries a spear while Gudú is on foot and carries a dagger. Before any combat can begin, Gudulín’s horse bolts in the wrong direction towards a wall and smashes into it. Consequently, Gudulín falls to the ground and splits his head open. The episode is so brief that the narration of Gudulín’s demise is contained in only four lines: “Entonces, súbitamente, el caballo partió. Pero en dirección a la muralla. Y allí se estrelló, y cayó. Y cayó Gudulín, y su cabeza, con un terrible chasquido—como una inmensa nuez aplastada entre dos piedras—se abrió” (638).¹⁴ Trasgo, the goblin who accompanies Gudulín to the castle, rushes to his side. Echoing what the Lady says to Tontina, Gudulín tells Trasgo that he should have never been born and then dies.

Trasgo promises to take him to the Land of the Unborn and goes underground with Gudulín’s body, placing it in a specially built boat. Eventually Gudulín’s body is taken out to sea: “Y lo llevó con él [el mar], y lo hizo isla: pero isla sin raíces, flotante

como una nave que surca, sin parar, todos los mares del mundo. Y desde entonces Gudulín-isla navega y navega, tan solitario como fuera en su vida de niño” (641). Like Tontina and Predilecto, he will exist in another dimension in which he becomes a rootless island, floating forever in the sea. In a bridge to the first fairy tale analyzed, sometimes he nears certain coastlines where the Mermaid still wanders. They recognize each other and then they part. Their meeting validates the existence of another time in which characters coexist beyond the grave.

Just as Matute’s poetic style in *La torre vigía* softens the harsh and brutal edges of the world narrated within the novel, so too does the representation of time in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* present us with another way to view inexplicable events such as death. In *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, death is not the ultimate end for humans, but merely another world in which characters may continue on or become transformed into another entity. In the examples discussed, Gudulín dies when his head splits open, Predilecto drowns, and Tontina is burned at the stake. However, in the fairy tale world, all of them float peacefully and indefinitely in the sea. We begin to accept that the fairy tale world is potentially governed by a different set of rules, which serve to question our notions of mortality. Instead of death, we are offered an enchanted place that allows for rebirth and serves as a refuge that is disconnected from the kingdom of Olar. The classic fairy tales that Matute incorporates are especially apt for providing a sense of renewal and a safe haven. Tontina’s comatose state not only reminds us of Snow White’s deep sleep, but the symbolic metamorphosis offers a chance for her resurrection. Just as Snow White will awake from her deep sleep, so too might we believe that Tontina may one day be reborn, as revealed by the Lady of the Lake.

The fairy tales in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* work to form a pact between the reader and the text by offering another reading or world to which s/he may turn, which also causes us to draw conclusions between the fantasy world and the one in which we reside, as well as between the two worlds in the novel. As Jackson observes, “Fantasy tells of limits, and it is particularly revealing in pointing to ‘the edges of the real’” (23). Matute points to the edges of the real through the novel’s apocalyptic ending, which includes the quest and fairy tales. She most explicitly criticizes warfare and the weaknesses of humankind as exemplified by avarice and cruelty.

Although fantasy literature is widely considered to be entertainment or distraction from the everyday world, Matute’s brand of fantasy calls readers to reflect on the weaknesses of humankind. As Timmerman explains,

Fantasy literature is popularly construed as a light-hearted diversion from the tedium of modern life, a sound alternative, perhaps, to television. [. . .] It seems to me that fantasy has an additional significance uniquely its own. It possesses [. . .] a certain gravity with which it addresses the spiritual issues of humankind. Fantasy may be light-hearted at times, but it is not to be taken lightly. The characters, be they human, animal, or alien, confront and work through problems common to man. (101)

Matute explicitly addresses the problems of conflict, greed and political power through this other world vis-à-vis Gudú’s quest, and through the fairy tales and the debilitated kingdom that remains. While the apocalyptic ending signals that no good will come from a war that is waged for “practical” reasons, the entire novel is peppered with

commentaries about unnecessary invasion, the selfish nature of humankind and the consequences of our selfishness.

As a striking example, when Gudú is still a teenager and a young king, he and his half-brother dispute the nature of war. As Gudú prepares to invade the Land of the Ravine, Predilecto tells him that war is not noble, and Gudú concurs. However, the King replies that it has to be done and that one should take war for what it is. Predilecto further questions Gudú about his motives and asks him why, if his brother thinks that war is dishonorable, does he seem to enjoy it and even to provoke it? Gudú avoids a direct response and replies instead that it is a waste of time to ponder such thoughts. He says, “Que sea noble o no lo sea, no hará perder mi tiempo en cavilaciones. Es útil para nuestra causa, y con ello basta” (281). In Gudú’s silence and his impatience Matute voices her criticism. Although Gudú acknowledges that war is ignoble, why does he continue to acquire more territories? The question of higher motives is ironically cast aside by the noblest figure in the novel—the King. The nature of war is disparaged when Gudú chooses not to deliver a single reason to engage in the extended conflict that organizes the novel. He sidesteps the question of nobility in favor of practicality, which ultimately leads to the demise of the entire empire, thus proving that his reasoning in the quote above is grossly miscalculated. In the end the quest was not useful; it was devastating. If Gudú had never captured Urdska and claimed the Steppes as his own, she would have never incited a civil war that brings the kingdom to its knees. Olar has always been the invader, not the invaded. The conflict enacted throughout the novel stems from a desire to conquer and expand Olar rather than to defend it.

Queen Ardid serves as another target of condemnation. She teaches Gudú's son Raigo about the nature of humankind, that all human beings are inherently vain, sadistic and egotistical:

Somos humanos, y hemos de aceptarnos tal y como somos: no con llantos ni ternuras venceremos. Nadie pudo vencer con estas armas, que yo sepa, en este mundo nuestro. Otra cosa son los seres sobrenaturales, los ángeles, las hadas, los trasgos...e incluso los antipáticos Señores del Subsuelo. Nosotros somos criaturas de carne débil, y cien veces más débiles de espíritu...Mezquinos, vanidosos, egoístas y crueles. Pero así somos. Luchemos, por tanto, con las armas que nos fueron dadas y dejemos atrás lo que aún no estamos capacitados para entender ni utilizar debidamente. (693)

Ardid delivers one of the most blatant attacks on the moral character of human beings. While it may come as no surprise that she rates humans below angelic or supernatural creatures, she goes so far as to place humans below even the creatures of the underworld. Her criticism offers no exceptions and she does not provide any other suggestions for improving the human race. Her solution, even in the face of ignorance, is war. As a queen, she should be a model for the highest moral and ethical conduct, yet she teaches her grandson and possible heir to the throne that he should accept and maybe even embrace all the deficiencies of humankind and use force to overcome them.

This passage also informs us of the life lessons learned by the only female figure who matures in the novel from a child into a woman and a mother. As a result, her

teachings must be viewed as some of the most profound in the entire of the novel. Because of her personal battles, she categorizes emotional displays such as “llantos” and “ternuras” as useless weapons. She centers her lexicon around conflict by choosing words such as *vencer*, *luchemos* and *armas*. This may be understandable given that her family was murdered when she was only seven, and her husband Volodioso betrayed her trust and exiled her to the tower. Ardid’s lessons come from her own experiences in which magic has proven more powerful than emotions and war is greater than reason. Her weapons are magic spells, which ultimately made her the youngest queen of Olar and mother to the most powerful king; love has only brought her pain.

While we may learn from individuals such as Gudú and Ardid, the quest also offers social criticism. After capturing the object of his quest, Gudú’s revelations take on a social meaning. As Timmerman explains, “The quest may originate from the same sense of alienation in this world, but its effort is somehow to rectify the situation in the world itself. The quest then is never individual, but social. One man may engage it; but he engages it for others” (100). Gudú’s quest may be achieved by an individual, but the lesson of disillusionment is for Matute’s readers; “The fantasy artist expects the reader to learn something about himself by having made a sojourn through fantasy. The writer invites the reader to probe his spiritual nature, to grow in experience, to resolve himself to new directions. The quest provides a basis for such exploration” (Timmerman 92). Gudú’s quest becomes our quest; his journey is our journey.

Through the protagonist’s quest, the writer of fantasy invites us to undertake our own sojourn and learn something about our world. This idea is most explicitly demonstrated when, before entering the Steppes, Gudú says, “Tal vez yo no tengo

deseos, acaso soy únicamente el instrumento de innumerables deseos anteriores” (569). Gudú’s aspiration to conquer the Steppes is not an individual aspiration; rather, he is Matute’s instrument for delivering a lesson which teaches us that desire leads to disillusionment once the object is attained and that war for “noble” causes is not justified.

When Gudú finally enters the great city where the ruler of the Steppes, Queen Urdska, resides, more insight into Matute’s message is uncovered through Gudú’s quest. Surprisingly, he is disillusioned by what he sees. The narrator describes the moment:

Pero entre las cenizas, entre la más atropellada ruina, residía aún eco de un fulgor, la irreductible memoria de un antiguo esplendor. Y un pensamiento le asaltó: “Quizá el esplendor consista en ir más allá de ti mismo, más allá de todo cuanto conoces; quizá sea eso lo que en los viejos libros llaman la gloria”. Pero la gloria, ya, era una imagen tan pálida a sus ojos como las páginas de los viejos libros. (597)

The victory of the quest enlightens Gudú for the first time about the nature of war and, according to the passage above, the emptiness that his conquests bring. The great city, reduced to a mountain of ashes, metaphorically represents his disillusionment upon realizing his hollow ambition. What he imagined as being the most glorious moment of his reign immediately becomes stale and antiquated. Like the pages in old books, his quest and his grand obsession are now history.

When Gudú meets Urdska we learn that the achievement of his goal pales in comparison to what he had imagined. The narrator describes the bittersweet victory:

La ciudad soñada la gran deseada, era sólo un montón de escombros cuando por fin Gudú entró en ella, feroz y victorioso. [. . .] Y entre la ceniza y los jirones de seda roja, dos mujeres se alzaban, como dos columnas de piedra: eran la Reina Urdska y su hermana menor, Ravja. Dos mujeres, de carne y hueso, altivas como ala que puede avistarse a veces en un rayo de sol. “No es oro, no es polvo de sol, no es la niebla encendida que yo vi alzarse desde las aguas del Brazo Gigante...es el falso polvo de oro que tiñe las alas de algunas mariposas,” se dijo Gudú, con un sutil estremecimiento. (597)

Although he is successful, Gudú alludes to the disenchantment that taints his completed mission. The city of his dreams is no more than an illusion, like the gold of a butterfly's wings, and the fierce, diabolic queen that he imagined as the ruler of the Steppes is no more than a human made of flesh and bone. The two women who stand before him rise up like stiff stone columns amid the debris, hardened by years of conflict against Gudú. The red silk and the ashes symbolize the bloodshed and destruction in the wake of battle. They also visually reinforce Gudú's realization that Urdska is made of flesh, represented by red silk, and bone, symbolized by the color of the ashes and the stone columns. Ironically, what should be Gudú's most glorious moment is perhaps his most melancholy. He says, "Es extraño que la realización de un deseo provoque un vacío tan grande...' Y era verdad: en vez de la euforia que se reflejaba en sus hombres, un vacío creciente se abría ante él" (598). The colors and images of these scenes symbolically render the marked contrast between Gudú's expectations and the

outcome; what should be glorious and golden is pallid and ashy; instead of being filled with pride and happiness, Gudú is left empty.

The representation of time throughout the quest also plays an essential role in Gudú's disillusionment. If the quest were not portrayed as interminable and arduous, then the gap between Gudú's expectations and the reality of what he finds would not be as great. The sharp contrast between the majestic city that he imagines at the beginning of the quest and the ashes that he walks upon at the end of the mission visually represents the difference between what he anticipates and what he ultimately encounters. This long-imagined victory leads to an enemy who is just like him, a human being rather than a legendary mythic creature. Perhaps this is why, when he defeats Urdska, he commands his soldiers not to harm her and to handle her with the respect that a great queen deserves.

His greed for new territories and his unquenchable thirst for power lead to destruction, for it is only *after* conquering the Steppes that his empire begins to dissolve. Urdska wages a civil war against him by seducing one of Gudú's most trusted leaders. Raigo betrays his father by attempting to take the throne. The rest of Gudú's children kill one another and leave no possible heir to the kingdom. His quest, then, only serves as a catalyst to dissolve his empire rather than to enlarge it. Not coincidentally, the region beyond the Steppes is aptly named the End of the World. While the name denotes a mythic region that is literally the periphery of the remaining territory, it also foreshadows the apocalyptic conclusion of the novel. After Gudú conquers the Steppes, only the end of the world awaits, and Gudú's once great empire will disappear into oblivion.

Like the *Book of Revelation* in the Bible, also known as the Apocalypse of John, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* features apocalyptic elements such as the prophesied ending, invasions, war and destruction. The novel opens with a scene in which Gudú's grandfather Sikrisio sees a dragon, a scene that prefigures the end of the novel and the end of Olar. The first warning for Gudú occurs when he returns to his kingdom to reinforce his crippled army after battling the Hordes in his quest for the Steppes. One night he climbs the watchtower and he sees Sikrisio's dragon. The narrator describes the scene:

Gudú trepó escaleras arriba hacia la noche, que se había apoderado de cuanto alcanzaban sus ojos. Impelido por un deseo acuciante que ni siquiera podía explicarse, ascendió a la torre más alta del Castillo Negro, allí donde los vigías oteaban el confín más alejado del horizonte, al acecho de posibles amigos o enemigos. Rechazó toda compañía—incluido el propio vigía—y se enfrentó, solo, a la gran tiniebla del mundo, a la enorme y oscura pregunta de lo desconocido. [. . .] Inesperadamente, de lo más alto y lejano de la noche, surgió una voz, renació, pues era una voz Antigua, una voz que se remontaba a aquel día en que Sikrisio conoció el terror. Y Gudú creyó entrever en el gran cielo la enorme cabeza, misteriosa y agorera, de un Dragón. Pero antes de que pudiera afirmarse cabalmente en esta visión, tal y como se deshacen las nubes en el cielo, aquella imagen había desaparecido. Tan solo la tersa y negra noche se extendía de Nuevo, inmensa y sobrecogedora, sobre él. (568-69)

Alone in the darkness, Gudú envisions the dragon for an instant, which foreshadows the decline of Gudú as a powerful king, as well as the destruction of his empire. The setting of the scene represents the gloomy remains of Olar. Gudú climbs towards darkness, towards evil, symbolically represented as he scales the tower towards the night sky. Gudú must rise high above and then look down on the Black Castle, a symbol of the mundane, the worldly, and political power, in order to gain perspective on what awaits him on the horizon. Not coincidentally, the dragon reveals itself in this moment. However, we must note that Gudú is alone and that he makes out the image of the dragon, which disappears just as quickly as it appeared. The subjective description of the encounter adds a mythic quality to the scene and creates an ominous mood.

A beast most notably associated with evil or the devil, the dragon also symbolically heralds an apocalypse.¹⁵ The reappearance of the dragon also links the quest to the ultimate downfall of the kingdom. According to Frye, one of the central forms of the quest is the dragon-killing theme, in which the dragon symbolizes the sterility of the land itself, and the sterility of the land is present in the age and impotence of the king, who is sometimes suffering from an incurable malady or wound (189). In the passage above, the dragon appears when the quest is already well underway. Though the quest may be successful, we begin to sense that Gudú may face an enemy even greater than the Steppes, which he will not win if we take the dragon to be a menacing sign that foretells the end of the world.

Ardid delivers another sinister premonition when she forewarns her grandchildren about the end of the world after Urdska stages an uprising against Gudú. Intuiting that

the end is near, she says, “Hijos míos, huid vosotros, y seguid mi consejo: salid, escapad cuanto antes os sea posible de estas tierras, y no retornéis a ellas jamás...pues sé, puesto que mi corazón me lo dice, que el fin de este lugar, de este mundo nuestro, se acerca” (736). The novel confirms the idea that an age is definitively closing through Gudú’s vision and Ardid’s instinctive forewarning, as well as through the decadence of the kingdom. The story has come full circle in the sense that Olar has returned to its origins. The narrator describes its decay prior to the civil war thus:

Olar había regresado a los oscuros días de austeridad [. . .] . Un aire lúgubre que recordaba vagamente los tiempos de guerras insensatas de Volodioso se extendía por doquier. Nuevamente, los hombres fueron sacados de sus casas; los campesinos y todo aquel que nada tenía se abandonaban a la desesperación. Y tampoco los nobles permanecían alejados de aquella situación: los más jóvenes, empujados por codicia, ambición y las ansias de aventura, creían ver representado en Gudú el sueño de sus vidas; y los viejos, aunque recelosos o francamente a su pesar, les secundaban, pues sólo así podían retener aún lo que Volodioso les había quitado y Gudú devuelto. (605)

Prefigured by the dragon and confirmed in the passage above, Olar has returned to its original state of sterility. It is a fallen empire, chaotic and violent, with the apocalyptic disintegration of its monarchy. Matute’s critique on social inequity sarcastically surfaces when the narrator mentions that no one is exempt from doom, *not even* the nobility; when a nation’s children become greedy and ambitious because they emulate their King, the end must be near.

What is left of Gudú's kingdom resembles the desperate place that characterized the beginning of the saga in the time of Count Olar. The narrator uses words such as "regresado" and "nuevamente" in the passage above to further emphasize the circularity of the novel from its inception up to this point. At the beginning of the novel the narrator describes the initial state of the kingdom thusly:

En tierras del Conde Olar, la paz llegó a ser un relato antiguo, una vieja leyenda transmitida por los ancianos. El mundo, para ellos, era un estremecido y furioso nido de alimañas, de entre las cuales debían salir como fuera, aun desgarrados, pero con vida suficiente para sembrar también la muerte que, como muralla protectora, les defendiera del exterior. Todo hombre lindante llegó a ser, más tarde o más temprano, un enemigo. (24)

If we were to switch this description of Olar with its description after the fulfillment of the quest and after the ensuing civil war, it would be hard to distinguish between the two. Nevertheless, what makes the ending more acute is that as readers we have witnessed the kingdom expand to its fullest expression, when Gudú conquers the Steppes, and then collapse shortly afterward, which makes the ending even more dramatic. If the kingdom were static, then Gudú would never have become a great king. The decline of the kingdom, then, is intimately intertwined with Gudú's personal demise. His lineage, just like the kingdom, is on the verge of extinction, but unlike the *Book of Revelation*, as Pérez observes, there is no final note of hope in which a perfect age is heralded for an eternity ("Apocalipsis" 55). Matute's apocalyptic vision also differs from that of Tolkien, who believed that all fantasy must end in a eucatastrophe, or a happy ending that

produces everlasting joy. Instead, Matute departs from the paradigm and offers no glimmer of hope in the events that conclude the novel.

Although Gudú does not die in the end, we presume that his death approaches. Prematurely aged, sick and tired, the once fearless leader is now mocked by the young boys in his kingdom. When he tries to recruit them as guards for him, they laugh and call him old and useless:

Viejo tonto y feo.

Y [el chico] echó a correr entre las zarzas en busca de sus compañeros.

En ese momento el frío se hizo insoportable, y el Rey notó que algo dentro de él zozobraba: como había oído decir a su madre en tiempos de la Reina Leonia, se hundían las naves piratas en el mar del Sur.

Corrió al Lago, se miró en él, y en lugar de ver reflejado al Rey de Olar, contempló a un Viejo andrajoso y torpe. Los pobres aficionados que fueron Ardid, el Trasgo y el Hechicero no habían previsto que el Rey no podía amar a nadie, excepto a sí mismo. En aquel momento un antiguo y conocido Dragón emergía del agua: un Dragón que llegaba a él desde la oscura memoria de su sangre, desde el terror de Sikrisio. Con un débil grito, lloró por primera vez. Por él, por toda su vida, por su perdida juventud y, sobre todo, por la gran ignorancia de cuanto le rodeaba. (764)

Literally, no one, including Gudú himself, recognizes him as the great King of Olar. This passage is in sharp contrast to Gudú's moment of pride upon seeing the Steppes for the first time and feeling his entire lineage stand up inside of him. Perhaps the dizziness he feels is the first inkling of love that he has ever felt. The first tears he cries and the love

or sadness he finally feels for himself break the spell that his mother cast. In addition, when Gudú sees an old man reflected in the water instead of a king, another kind of spell is broken. Gudú not only begins to love for the first time, but this marks the height of his awareness. He realizes that his ambition and desire for power and territories have only led to self-destruction and a disappearing empire, heralded by the great Dragon. The beast surfaces at the moment that Gudú breaks the spell, thereby signaling the end of the world.

Although Gudú finally loves, albeit only himself, and expresses emotion through his tears, we are denied a happy ending. The last line reads, “Y el llanto del Rey cayó al Lago, y éste creció. Creció de tal forma que anegó la ciudad, el reino y el País entero, hasta más allá de las lindes donde Gudú había pisado. Y tanto él como su Reino cuantos con él vivieron, desaparecieron en el Olvido” (765). At the same moment that his tears wash away his mother’s spell, the lake also washes away Gudú’s entire kingdom and takes Gudú with it.

While there is a fairy tale world apart from the bleak kingdom of Olar, the two worlds collide in the end when the lake submerges everything, and we are left with the notion that perhaps what we have been reading all along is one fairy tale. The fairy tale world that provides a refuge for Tontina, Predilecto and Gudulín disappears into the vast body of water that overtakes the kingdom. Moreover, the fairy tale world that coexists alongside Olar does not guarantee that everyone who resides in it lives happily ever. That is, in order to exist in the fairy tale world, one has to die. We begin to realize that the kingdom of Olar has more in common with the fairy tale world due to the ending of the novel. When Gudú breaks the spell (a convention of the fairy tale) it is the catalyst

for an apocalypse rather than a happy ending. Also consistent with fairy tales, his tears merge with nature and they become the watershed that submerges the entire kingdom and causes it to disappear into oblivion.

Even for readers, a spell is broken at the end of the novel when we run out of hope. If we recall the genealogical tree and the map that preface the narrative, Matute has created a textual apocalypse. Gudú's tears not only wash away the kingdom, but they also erase the dynasty that forms the tree and the fantasy world contained within the map and within our own imaginations. The title of the novel also suggests erasure because the title character does not allude to the Beloved King, the Invincible King, or the Remembered King; it names the *Forgotten King Gudú*.

In the face of such a pessimistic ending one must wonder why Matute does not escape into a world of optimism. In a novel populated with countless characters, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* ironically ends with nothing, or even worse, with oblivion. However, the apocalyptic ending can connect to the "real" if we return to the idea that fantasy addresses the problems of humankind.

The apocalyptic ending provokes a comparison between the disintegrating Kingdom of Olar and our own world in which wars are waged in the name of avarice and dominance. Pérez observes that Matute maintains a "comparación implícita entre la época descrita y el tiempo actual, muy visible en el paralelismo entre los finales de dos milenios con su proliferación de guerras, catástrofes, destrucción y sucesos realmente apocalípticos" ("Apocalipsis" 55). Although many fantasists may choose to portray a positive outcome in which everything is set right with the world, Matute offers a bleaker picture. Through Gudú and the complete destruction of an empire, we witness an

allegory for the deterioration and ultimately the disappearance of humankind. What makes Gudú so great is exactly what makes him so weak. His inability to love and his insatiable thirst for conquering new territories make him the greatest ruler Olar has ever known, but these same qualities lead him nowhere and he ends with nothing. In this other world, Matute delivers a protagonist, a king, whose actions prove that he is superior to all others. Yet he builds an empire based on selfishness, ambition and the absence of love. Gudú's quest and the demise of a once blossoming empire prompt us to ponder our own world and the consequences that may follow when the thirst for political power, greed and conflict are all-consuming.

Unlike *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, the third novel of Matute's trilogy, *Aranmanoth*, does not have an apocalyptic ending. Set in an unknown place and time, an omniscient narrator tells an impossible love story between a part-fairy, part-human boy named Aranmanoth and a young girl named Windumanoth who set off through the forest in search of the girl's homeland. In *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, Matute referenced well-known fairy tales, but in *Aranmanoth* she creates her own. The quest motif resurfaces, but this time the object of the search is never found. Although the novel does not conclude with the near-extinction of the world and everyone in it, there is no happy ending as the co-protagonists are murdered just before finding their way home. Years later, Aranmanoth and his story become a legend in the novel.

In the next chapter, then, I will continue to examine the relationship between the protagonist, the other characters and the environment but I will build on it to discuss how the legend that closes the novel informs these relationships. In addition, I will address how the representation of time in the novel creates a pact with the reader. In

addition, I will show how this last novel in Matute's fantasy trilogy is the most complex by addressing the legend as a means through which Matute expands the narrative into infinity rather than dissolving it into oblivion. Ultimately I will discuss *Aranmanoth* as a means of depicting the "real" through fantasy by commenting on the dichotomy of human nature and the perversion of honor.

NOTES

1 The *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines a “saga” as the following: The Norse name for various kinds of prose tales composed in medieval Scandinavia and Iceland and written down from the 12th century to the 14th. These usually tell of heroic leaders--early Norse kings or 13th century bishops--or of the heroic settlers of Iceland in the 9th and 10th centuries; others, like the *Volsunga saga*, relate earlier legends. The emphasis on feuds and family histories in some famous sagas like *Njáls saga* has led to the term's application in English to any long family story spanning two or more generations. (298)

2 While Matute did not write a novel between the publication dates of *La torre vigía* and *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, she published short stories for children and collections of short stories for adults, including *El aprendiz* (1972), *Sólo un pie descalzo* (1983), *La virgen de Atioquía y otros relatos* (1990), *De ninguna parte* (1993), *La oveja negra* (1994), *El verdadero final de la bella durmiente* (1995), *El árbol de oro y otros relatos* (1995) and *Casa de juegos prohibidos* (1996).

3 I choose to view Gudú as the protagonist given that Ardid dies, the novel's title bears his name, and the majority of the narrative action is devoted to him.

4 *Olvidado Rey Gudú* ranked fourth among all the novels exhibited at La Feria del Libro in 1997, selling 2,147 copies. According to Miguel Angel Trenas in *La Vanguardia*, Matute's novel followed *Poemas de amor* by Antonio Gala, which sold 5,668 copies, Rosa Montero's *La hija del caníbal* with 4,815 copies sold, and *El capitán Alatriste* by Arturo Pérez Reverte with 3,358 copies sold.

5 Websites like as *Papel en blanco* (<http://www.papelenblanco.com/fantastico-ci-fi/olvidado-rey-gudu-de-ana-maria-matute>) and *Lecturalia* (<http://www.lecturalia.com/libro/4710/olvidado-rey-gudu>) provide a review of *Olvidado Rey Gudú* and offer readers an opportunity to comment on the novel. Other websites such as *El Recreo* (<http://www.el-recreo.com/libros/gudu.htm>) also give a brief review of the novel and allow visitors to add a personal recommendation. There is a Facebook page devoted to *Olvidado Rey Gudú* (<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Olvidado-Rey-Gudu/110595822286731>) as well as a blog titled *Un libro al día* in which readers may express their opinions about the novel (<http://unlibroaldia.blogspot.com/2010/05/ana-maria-matute-olvidado-rey-gudu.html>).

6 I thank Professor Núria Silleras-Fernández for bringing to my attention the Nordic context and allegorical associations within the novel. I am also grateful to Professor Helga Luthers who provided me with sources that furthered my investigation of these issues.

7 According to Scott Shay in *The History of English: A Linguistic Introduction* (2008), Old Norse is a North Germanic language that was spoken by inhabitants of Scandinavia and inhabitants of their overseas settlements during the Viking Age until about 1300 (Shay 56-57).

8 Prof. Núria Silleras-Fernández also notes that the name Raigo may relate to the Japanese culture. The name Raigo may also reference the Japanese paintings that announce the death of someone. A *raigō* ((来迎)), which means "welcoming approach," is carried into the house of a Japanese person who is near death (Hooker).

9 Every quest has some basic tenets, according to Timmerman in *Other Worlds: The Fantasy Genre*. We recognize that the hero or protagonist of the work must undertake a long journey and search desperately for the object of his or her mission. Furthermore, the quest is always directed toward something, although the pursuer may not clearly understand the nature of the quest or have a clear understanding of what s/he seeks. The quest gives meaning to the life of the protagonist or hero, whether it be spiritual or religious. Quests are also characterized by a serious or life-threatening tone because there is always something at stake and it involves great risk. Often the seeker is placed in grave danger and s/he must use his or her sheer willpower to continue the pursuit. Timmerman explains the difference between the quest and the adventure. The adventure may be undertaken out of boredom and is never oriented toward a goal or object. The quest, on the other hand, is a more guided and serious undertaking. Timmerman follows W.H. Auden's six qualities of a "true quest":

- 1) A precious Object and/or Person to be found and possessed or married.
- 2) A long journey to find it, for its whereabouts are not originally known.
- 3) A hero. The precious Object cannot be found by anybody, but only by the one person who possesses the right qualities of breeding or character.
- 4) A Test or series of Tests by which the unworthy are screened out, and the hero revealed.
- 5) The Guardians of the Object who must be overcome before it can be won. They may simply be a further test of the hero's *arête*, or they may be malignant in themselves.
- 6) The Helpers who with their knowledge and magical powers assist the hero and but for whom he would never succeed. They may appear in human or in animal form. (92-93)

10 In her book *Women and Children First: Spanish Women Writers and the Fairy Tale Tradition*, María Elena Soliño explains that Juan Valera, although known for *Pepita Jiménez* (1873), contributed significantly to the fairy tale tradition in Spain. In 1860 he published *Florilegio de cuentos, leyendas y tradiciones vulgares* and in 1864 he wrote three fairy tales: "La muñequita," "La buena fama," and "El hechicero" (Soliño, *Women* 24). In the nineteenth century fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen were translated into Spanish and rose in popularity. As Soliño notes, *Cuentos escogidos de los hermanos Grimm* by José S. Viedma appeared in 1879 and was joined by *Cuentos escogidos de Andersen* by R. Fernández Cuesta in the same year.

Saturnino Calleja was largely responsible for bringing fairy tales into the literary market for children in Spain, including Andersen's *The Snow Queen*, which was rendered as *Los cuentos de Fernandillo*, and the Grimm brothers' *Hansel and Gretel* became known as *Juanito and Margarita*. Both fairy tales were published in Spain in 1879 (Soliño, *Women* 24).

11 Soliño views the works of Carmen Martín Gaité, Esther Tusquets and Matute as “gendered texts” because the intertextual fairy tales in their novels were largely expected to educate a female audience. She focuses on these authors not only for their commercial success but also because the use of fairy tales is almost a trademark of their works, as noted in her Preface to *Women and Children First*. Tusquets employs Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* and *The Nightingale*, as well as J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan*, in *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*; Martín Gaité re-writes *Little Red Riding Hood* into *Caperucita en Manhattan* and transforms Snow White into *El castillo de las tres murallas*.

12 As a tribute to the beloved fairy tales from her childhood, Matute dedicates *Olvidado Rey Gudú* to the memory of H.C. Andersen, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm and Charles Perrault.

13 Soliño observes that while *Peter Pan* is not technically considered a fairy tale, it does belong to a set of texts from the beginning of the twentieth century that borrowed from the fairy tale tradition. She refers to Steven Swann Jones who notes that these prepubescent fantasies draw heavily on fairy tale elements, such as the inclusion of supernatural adversaries, magical phenomena, young protagonists and the safe return home after overcoming their fears (*Women* 190-91).

14 Gudulín's death recalls the nursery rhyme *Humpty Dumpty*, insofar as his fate is depicted in a very light-hearted manner. The famous rhyme reads thusly:

Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall,
Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.
All the King's horses, and all the King's men
Couldn't put Humpty together again!

Literally one could rewrite *Humpty Dumpty* as “Gudulín's horse smashed up against a wall. / Gudulín had a great fall./ All King Gudú's horses, and all King Gudú's men/ Couldn't put Gudulín together again!” Matute's narrative sequence even repeats the word *cayó*, and the rhyme between the words *estrelló*, *cayó*, and *se abrió* make the scene read like a nursery rhyme instead of an emotional account of the young boy's sudden death.

15 Frye explicitly connects the dragon to *The Book of Revelation* and observes the following:

In the Bible we have a sea-monster usually named leviathan, who is described as the enemy of the Messiah, and whom the Messiah is destined to kill in the “day of the Lord.” The leviathan is the source of social sterility [. . .]. In the Book of Revelation the leviathan, Satan, and

the Edenic serpent are all identified. This identification is the basis for an elaborate dragon-killing metaphor in Christian symbolism in which the hero is Christ (often represented in art standing on a prostrate monster), the dragon Satan, the impotent old king Adam, whose son Christ becomes, and the rescued bride the Church. (189)

While the dragon in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* never appears in a physical form, the prophetic visions throughout the novel sustain its representation as the harbinger of inevitable doom.

CHAPTER IV

Aranmanoth: The Antidote to the Apocalypse

Four years after the blockbuster novel *Olvidado Rey Gudú* made its debut, Matute published *Aranmanoth*, her third fantasy novel, in 2000. The last novel of her fantasy trilogy tells the story of a half-human, half-magical young boy named Aranmanoth who is the child of Orso, a knight from Lines, and of a water fairy. Shortly after Orso marries a young girl named Windumanoth, she and Aranmanoth depart from Lines in search of Windumanoth's homeland, referred to only as the South.¹ Their journey ultimately leads to their martyrdom, and within the novel the story of the title character becomes a legend.²

La torre vigía, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* and *Aranmanoth* share a setting that is unrecognizable in terms of place and time, and that thereby situates them within the mode of fantasy. In the previous two chapters, I used Frye's classification of the hero and his relationship to other characters and to the environment to determine where each novel sits along the continuum between fantasy and realism. The superiority of the protagonist to others and to his surroundings determines that each of the prior two novels is written in the mode of fantasy. In *Aranmanoth* Matute's exploration of the legend determines the protagonist's superiority if we continue to examine the novel in accordance with Frye's theory of modes.

In contrast to the previous novels, Matute alters her concept of fantasy in *Aranmanoth* by endowing the protagonist with a supernatural makeup because he is half-fairy and half-human, and he is again a “chosen one.” As she does with the protagonists of *La torre vigía* and *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, Matute builds on the prophetic hero model of the first two novels because *Aranmanoth* is also a legendary redeemer, which makes him the most elevated protagonist of the trilogy.

Whereas a lyrical prose style and the incorporation of fairy tales create a pact between the reader and the texts in the previous novels, the use of time through the legend in *Aranmanoth* sparks and sustains readerly intrigue. In this last novel of the trilogy, Matute widens her range of fantasy by veering away from the apocalyptic conclusions in *La torre vigía* and *Olvidado Rey Gudú* and creating a text that expands time, rather than contracting it. Matute extends her fantasy repertoire in *Aranmanoth* by harnessing fantasy literature’s capacity for continuation instead of other-worldly obliteration. Like its predecessors, however, the third novel includes, through this enchanted other world, Matute’s comments on the duplicitous nature of humankind, the nobility of the poor and the perversion of honor.

Aranmanoth garnered the attention of Matute’s fans, as evidenced in several websites in which readers praise the novel.³ In the scholarly realm, Janet Pérez explores the structural nature of *Aranmanoth* in her article, titled “More than a Fairy Tale: Ana María Matute’s *Aranmanoth*,” and she contextualizes the novel within Matute’s entire body of work. According to Pérez, *Aranmanoth* serves as a parable that teaches us to exalt life, love, youth and idealism.

In *Aranmanoth* Matute continues the fantasy investigation that she began in *La torre vigía* and continued in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* by setting the novel in an unfamiliar and primitive environment that resembles that of the Middle Ages. The story of the novel begins with an omniscient narrator who introduces us to a young boy named Orso. He soon becomes a knight and inherits Lines, which is his father's estate. When Orso encounters a water fairy in the forest, their union produces Aranmanoth, which means "mes de las espigas," or the month of the harvest, in honor of the month in which he was conceived. The Count, who presides over Lines and its surrounding territories, forms a political alliance by arranging a marriage between Orso and Windumanoth, who is only nine years old when she is sent to Lines.

Shortly after his bride's arrival, Orso must follow the Count's orders and leave on an unknown mission. He assigns Aranmanoth to Windumanoth as her guardian in his absence. Time passes and the two children grow into adolescents and soon fall in love. When they leave together in search of Windumanoth's homeland without notifying anyone, the Count orders that they be killed as their punishment for disgracing Orso. Devastated by their deaths, Orso renounces his wealth, bequeaths his estate to his servants and retires to a hermitage, where he passes the rest of his days in silence.

Some time after Aranmanoth's death, a poet comes to Lines and sings about a sacred boy named Aranmanoth who redeemed the sins of his father. Questioning both the veracity of the poet's story and the supposed death of the protagonist, the villagers of the territory beyond Lines venture into the woods in search of his head at the bottom of the waterfall. According to the narrator, Aranmanoth's story eventually becomes a legend.

The conversion of the narrative into a legend makes *Aranmanoth* the most complex novel of the three. In the third novel this narrative mechanism, as Matute's overarching vehicle for fantasy, distinguishes *Aranmanoth* from, and yet ties it to, its predecessors. In this chapter, then, I will explore the legend as a strategy that controls the status of the protagonist, as a way of structuring time that engages us as readers and as a platform for social criticism.

As a compendium of all three uses, the legend in *Aranmanoth* allows the protagonist to exist beyond his time. Due to Matute's creation of a legend within the text, the narrative model evolves from one of disintegration to one of amplification because legends, by definition, are spread indefinitely over time, which is evident in the conclusion of the novel as Aranmanoth's story continues to be told after he dies. By fabricating a legend, Matute taps into yet another advantage of fantasy. Mathews paraphrases Frye to explain the expansive potential of the fantasy mode; he observes that the mode has maintained the incorporation of the romantic, the mythic, and the philosophic discourses in the fiction of an age steeped in realism. Fantasy has the ability to extend over time and space, with a reach that encompasses both antiquity and infinity (Mathews 36).

When we consider the broad range of fantasy, the legend distinguishes itself from other narrative forms such as myth, even if the differences between them may not be concrete or clearly definable. In an attempt to define legend, I must note that legends differ from myths because they are based in history (although no real historical reference may exist) and the protagonist is not a god. Frye asserts the difference between legends and history. He explains, "The writing of history is an art, but no one

doubts that scientific principles are involved in the historian's treatment of evidence, and that the presence of this scientific element is what distinguishes history from legend" (7). The legend of Aranmanoth, because it is not based on any historical figure and because the protagonist is semi-divine, pushes the novel further into the realm of fantasy and definitively away from the genre of historical fiction.

We may also recognize *Aranmanoth* as a type of *cantar de gesta*, or epic poem based on legends, which are dedicated to superior beings such as gods or heroes with the goal of restoring honor through a series of challenging and daring trials. According to Carlos Alvar in *Épica medieval española* (1997), during the Middle Ages, the epic poem became known as a *cantar de gesta*, which refers to a narrative that is written in irregular verse and contains either a melody or monody.⁴ Characteristic of the epic poem is a hero who must pass a series of dangerous tests and restores honor and order through his/her noble actions. The hero also fights against an inevitable destiny and is willing to die without complaint. The hero's loyalty to the family and/or to his/her Lord drives the action, but it also may produce tension if the protagonist must choose between remaining faithful to his/her Lord or to his/her family. While the outcome always results in the tragic death of the father and the son in combat, the ending is happy if the hero achieves his/her goal. Another feature of the epic poem, according to Alvar, is the lament and subsequent vengeance of the lady who is left behind as a result of the death of the father and son. Epic poems also contain purely performative elements, as in theatre, but without stage directions.⁵

Aranmanoth may be read as a *cantar de gesta* when we view Aranmanoth and Windumanoth's search for the South as a trial. We also note loyalty to the Lord and/or

family. In the novel, this surfaces in Aranmanoth's loyalty to his father to protect Windumanoth, and he never attempts to deceive Orso when he and Windumanoth fall in love. We also note Orso's loyalty to the Count, which goes so far as to allow for the execution of his son and wife. Also consistent with the characteristics of the epic poem, Aranmanoth willingly surrenders to the soldiers when he is captured and then murdered, thereby accepting his destiny. Although the novel ends tragically, *Aranmanoth* concludes on a positive note in that the hero redeems his father of his sins, and Orso ceases to live under the Count's rule. Also, Aranmanoth becomes immortalized in the legend. The themes of vengeance, blood, combat and death, all of which are common to epic poems, are transposed to *Aranmanoth* through the deaths of the two adolescents because of their transgression. Complaints and laments by a noble lady who asks for justice or vengeance also characterize the genre. In the novel, while Windumanoth never asks for justice or vengeance, she does lament for her home and desires to return to the South. Finally, the poets give the novel a performative dimension as they reinvent and recite Aranmanoth's legend.

One outstanding feature of both legends and epic poems is that they are intimately linked to their audience and may vary over time due to the culture or society from which they emerge and to which they refer. In other words, just as the legend or epic poem may vary over time, so too does its audience. Armitt discusses the relationship between the legend and its listeners (or its readers):

According to J.R.R. Tolkien, the most appropriate metaphor to use to describe the diachronic composition of Arthurian legend is that of the soup cauldron simmering on the hob: the essence remains the same, but the

precise flavour and ingredients change. [. . .] From here it is easy to see how Arthurian fantasy changes shape to accommodate its readers and, in addition, the societies they represent: King Arthur has always been many things to many people... from [him] being an extra-terrestrial to his being the king of Atlantis...and in the 1980s, King Arthur was again sensationalized in the wake of the “Dungeons and Dragons” craze. (10)⁶

The legend, then, becomes an instrument through which we may gauge a certain social climate. How an audience receives a legend and how a legend varies over time reflect the tastes and/or beliefs of a society. This may suggest why *Aranmanoth* was as well received as *Olvidado Rey Gudú*.

If we return to Frye’s categorization of fiction, we may classify the novel as fantasy when we determine that Aranmanoth is superior in relationship to the other characters and to the environment. Also, because he is a legend, by definition he is portrayed as extraordinary. Due to his magical composition, he is semi-divine, which distinguishes him from the other protagonists in the trilogy. But because he is also half-human, we gain insight into human nature through his struggle to accept his unusual composition.

Aranmanoth is also unique in other ways, when compared to the two other protagonists of the trilogy. Unlike Gudú, the third protagonist never strives to be great, but he becomes legendary because his death absolves his father’s sins. The same cannot be said of the other protagonists in the trilogy. Only Aranmanoth and his story continue to be told by other characters, such as the villagers, in the novel. Another distinguishing feature of Aranmanoth is that people go in search of him not only

because he is legendary, but because he represents something more than himself. According to the text, years after the protagonist's death, people continue to seek his head in the waterfall because they want to believe in something, which is why the legend survives.

Aranmanoth's portrayal also differentiates him from the previous protagonists because the narrator carefully constructs him as the most messianic hero of the trilogy through numerous references to Christ. Aranmanoth's sacrosanctity manifests itself physically in the narrator's description:

Era un niño muy bello, alto—muy alto para su edad—, delgado y con grandes ojos azules, de un azul poco frecuente, parecido a los cielos despejados de nubes después de la tormenta. Se rumoreaba, tanto entre los que le querían como entre los que le envidiaban, que el color de sus ojos era el gran azul que, en ciertos días de verano, se extiende sobre los trigales. Su mirada era limpia, cristalina, como el agua transparente de un manantial.

(41-42)

Aranmanoth's characterization highlights his divine countenance, which complements his legendary appeal. He is taller than other children, which symbolically elevates him. Like Jesus, people love and envy him, which is often characteristic of messianic figures. The clear and transparent blue color associated with his physical description symbolically suggests purity and innocence, and his correlation to light colors indicates that he is free of darkness and of sin. The narrator also implies that he is able to see beyond what others may perceive. He has a clarity of vision, which can also represent sound moral judgment. In addition, the above quote underscores Aranmanoth's

intimate connection to nature and implies a religious symbolism. Because he comes from water, he is born baptized, clean and pure. The narrator prefigures the encroaching turmoil and suggests that Aranmanoth will restore peace to the land when we learn that his eyes are like the clear sky after a storm. As is often the case with legendary figures, the narrator's remarkable description of Aranmanoth makes him unlike any other character in the novel and announces his centrality to the forthcoming legend.

While Aranmanoth's marvelous features cast him as a celestial figure, his supernatural constitution and magical powers elevate him above all others as well. He is capable of defying the ordinary laws of nature, as when he appears to float above the forest floor.⁷ The narrator says, "Y de pronto ocurrió algo prodigioso: Aranmanoth pareció elevarse sobre sus pies y alcanzar una altura fuera de lo corriente" (74). Although we may not recognize this other world, the narrator confirms that this is an unusual and remarkable feat by describing it as *prodigioso*. This act also emphasizes Aranmanoth's correlation to Christ through his power of ascension. The occurrence in the forest not only suggests that he is an elevated character, it also foreshadows his rise when he becomes a legend.

Aranmanoth is the only character in the novel who is capable of curing people, like Jesus. His healing ability recalls the Biblical account of the woman who touched Jesus' robe and was subsequently cured of her disease (Mark 5:25-34). Like the woman who touched Jesus, the characters in the novel believe that touching Aranmanoth's locks will cure them. The narrator explains, "Se rumoreaba que eran espigas milagrosas, capaces de curar lo incurable, y algunos decían que solo bastaba contemplarlos o

rozarlos suavemente para que una extraña y bella calma se instalara en el corazón de cuantos se acercaban de él” (42). Like Jesus, he emanates a power that serves to help others rather than to rule them.

In another parallel, the woman who touched Jesus becomes fearful of him. Likewise, the people of Lines also fear Aranmanoth. The narrator observes, “Pero como suele suceder con todas las cosas inexplicables y bellas, Aranmanoth también causaba temor del que él apenas era consciente y que ni siquiera presentía puesto que, desde su llegada a la mansión del Señor de Lines, el niño se mostró ante todos como cualquier otro” (42). Just as Jesus walked among all people as one of them, Aranmanoth is an example of humility to others in the novel. The narrator describes his power as beautiful and unexplainable to those around him, which induces fear in the villagers. However, the narrator clearly states that this is not Aranmanoth’s intention. Barely aware of his magical abilities, he never uses them for selfish reasons. The juxtaposition of the narrator’s physical description of Aranmanoth together with the commentary on his powers emphasizes his proximity to Christ and make his messianic qualities more believable. As an essential component to his portrayal as a legendary redeemer, his superiority goes unquestioned. Rather than being characterized as a monster because of his supernatural abilities, Aranmanoth is described as a messianic hero. The Christ-like references strengthen his prophetic and sacrosanct nature, and they ultimately cast him as a celestial and divine figure rather than a grotesque one.

Building on the previous protagonists of the trilogy, Matute endows Aranmanoth with a redemptive quality in that the young boy is destined to become a savior. Before Orso’s encounter with the water fairy, he hears a voice that says, “Hijo mío, hijo mío, yo

soy tu verdugo y tú mi salvación” (13). At this point in the novel, it is unclear who will be the executioner and who will be the savior. Nevertheless, the passage foreshadows Aranmanoth’s role as emancipator and redeemer because Orso will indirectly assume the role of his son’s executioner. Although he is a messianic hero whose destiny elevates him above the other characters, the redemption of his father proves that the protagonist’s purpose is greater than that of his father. Aranmanoth’s mother informs Orso of their son’s sacrificial nature after their meeting at the waterfall in the woods. She says,

Pero sé que tu semilla ha prendido en mí y así, dentro de un tiempo recibirás el fruto de este arrebato: ese fruto será una criatura especial, diferente, medio mágica, medio humana y, por encima de todo, será un niño sagrado. Esto quiere decir que estará destinado a ser el objeto de algún sacrificio, el que purifica o el que redime. (19)

By not specifically detailing his mission, his mother’s premonition builds suspense and provides yet more evidence that corroborates her son’s sacred quality. His destiny proves to be one of selflessness.

Later, the narrator strategically reinforces the main character’s redemptive quality by repeating a scene from the beginning of the novel, but s/he offers us a different perspective. When the old man initially brings Aranmanoth to Orso, we first witness the scene through Orso’s eyes. However, when the boy is older, the old man remembers that night and provides greater insight. He says, “Éste es tu hijo, engendrado en el Mes de las Espigas. Por tanto, su nombre es Aranmanoth. Éste es el niño que te va a redimir de todos tus errores, de todas tus crueldades, de todos tus olvidos” (93).

Aranmanoth's status as redeemer strategically escalates through textual flashbacks. For the first time in the novel we understand that he will vindicate his father's sins, although at this point we do not know what those sins are. As if we were reading a detective novel, we gradually gather more clues about Aranmanoth's fate. When we finally learn that he will save his father from his sins, we still do not know how. This causes the narrative tension to mount and adds to the protagonist's fame.

His redemptive status intricately ties into his superiority in relationship to the other characters. Whereas the quest in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* is the singular event that elevates Gudú above all others, Matute alters the quest in *Aranmanoth* because it is shared between two characters, and because it also complements the redemption motif. The quest unites Aranmanoth and Windmanoth as lovers, but it also leads to their eventual martyrdom. When Orso acquiesces to the Count's orders and allows the execution of his wife and his son, Aranmanoth's role as redeemer is clear.

According to Frye, the quest is "traditionally associated with rites of passage, particularly initiation rites, which represent in ritual the transformation of the quester into a new state of being and symbolize rebirth" (quoted in Matthews 49). This is true of Aranmanoth and Windumanoth; they begin their quest as children and are transformed during their voyage into sexually aware adolescents. Unlike the quest for the Steppes in *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, the two youths never locate the South, the object of their mission, because it symbolizes childhood, as something that can never be regained. Theirs is a quest in which the two young companions come of age and learn the meaning of love.

Throughout the novel, the narrator slowly constructs an image of the maturation of the two companions, but the quest represents the culmination of their growth.

Windumanoth's desire to reclaim her childhood spurs them to find her homeland because she rejects her impending womanhood and status as wife. Before they leave Lines in search of the South, the narrator observes how the servants correct Windumanoth for engaging in childlike behavior:

Aunque no lo sabían, Aranmanoth y Windumanoth habían crecido. [. . .]
 Una mañana, como otras veces corrieron a refugiarse, en la estancia de las mujeres que hilaban y conversaban. Pero esta vez, al verles llegar, éstas cesaron en sus conversaciones, se levantaron y se inclinaron ante ellos. [. . .] "Señora, comportaos. Ya no sois una niña." (82)

In this definitive moment, Windumanoth can no longer ignore her inevitable path towards womanhood. The passage not only describes how Windumanoth's attention is caught, but also causes the reader to sit up and take notice. When the older ladies stop talking, it is as if a record suddenly stops. Their shared act of standing up and bowing before Windumanoth and Aranmanoth makes the scene even more dramatic. By addressing Windumanoth's conduct, the narrator also addresses us and makes us aware that she is too old to behave like a child and to play games.

As another example of the children's forthcoming adolescence, both Windumanoth and Aranmanoth grow tired of listening to the stories that entertained them as children. The narrator explains that their loss of interest in childish tales occurs at the same time that they begin to develop adult feelings for one another:

Se miraron a los ojos y sintieron que aquellas historias ya no captaban su interés como lo hacían antes, que aquellas voces no les conducían a lugares remotos y desconocidos ni las sentían a su alrededor anunciando

secretos e imposibles. En realidad, se dieron cuenta de que tan sólo tenían ojos el uno para el otro. (82-83)

They are gradually beginning to become sexually aware of themselves and each other, and they now prefer to hear the love poems sung by the poet who passes through Lines. Through the substitution of one narrative for another, poetry for children's stories, the narrator implicitly reveals their maturing tastes, which not only signals Aranmanoth and Windumanoth's inevitable transformation into adulthood but also portends their own love story.

Their transition from being child companions into being lovers is an essential step that leads to Aranmanoth becoming a redeemer. If they had not fallen in love, there would be no need for Orso's honor to be restored and for their imminent death by the Count's order. Moreover, the way in which their love story unfolds is very innocent and is depicted as a natural progression, which is, in turn, key to strengthening the protagonist's divinity. If their love were portrayed as illicit, then his death would not be viewed as redemptive.

Each of the two companions is seen as innocent and naïve even though their relationship becomes sexually charged. Windumanoth's innocence is maintained in her desire to avoid growing up. Despite her more mature tastes in entertainment, she rejects her adult role, as evidenced the day before she marries Orso. She complains to Aranmanoth that she does not want to be dressed or coiffed by the servants. She says, "me he escapado de las mujeres que querían vestirme y peinarme, y decirme cuánto he de desterrar de mi vida [. . .]. Aranmanoth, hermano mío, yo no soy una mariposa" (50). Although she protests the servants' efforts to dress her and comb her hair,

Windumanoth's words betray her. By employing a metaphor for what she does not want to become, she exposes her maturity. In other words, by rejecting her prescribed role as a decorative butterfly, she reflects a more developed intellect than that of a child, and we notice that Windumanoth is aware of her impending transformation into adulthood. She views being groomed as a symbolic act that will not only cause her to metamorphose into a woman, but also eradicate any vestiges of her childhood.

Even after Aranmanoth and Windumanoth make love during their search for the South, the narrator clarifies that they are not aware that they have violated any moral or legal code. This is crucial to maintaining Aranmanoth's characterization as a legendary savior and redeemer. The two characters give voice to their dilemma when he says, "Windumanoth, debemos regresar a Lines . . . Orso, mi padre, está allí, y únicamente él puede comprendernos, puesto que nos ama a los dos" and she responds, "Es cierto . . . Orso es el único que verdaderamente nos ama" (160). His innocence is reinforced by his naïve assumption that Orso will fully understand their love. Although Aranmanoth and Windumanoth have committed a transgression, we continue to view him as a savior instead of a sinner.

Moreover, because the narrator reveals at the end of the novel that Orso is capable of seeing that two adolescents of the same age should naturally fall in love and not merit death or disgrace his honor, we ultimately view their relationship as unadulterated. When Orso returns to the forest after he learns that Aranmanoth and Windumanoth have left, he asks, "¿Por qué el amor de dos niños despierta tanto odio, o rancor, en los seres humanos?" (170). The narrator's inclusion of Orso's voice confirms Aranmanoth and Windumanoth's innocence and reinforces the heroic

characterization of the protagonist as redeemer and legendary figure. Pérez agrees that the couple is not guilty and observes, “Young, innocent, and beautiful, they are expiatory victims whose only ‘sin’ is loving one another” (“More Than” 505). They never conspire to run away together and deceive Orso. Aranmanoth intends to help Windumanoth find her home because he loves her, not because he wants to steal her from his father. If we recall that Orso did not understand the laws that he pledged to obey during his apprenticeship, we understand that Orso agrees to marry his young bride out of allegiance to the Count rather than for love.

Although the text is ambiguous as to whether Orso has sexual relations with his wife, his return to Lines propels Windumanoth to beg Aranmanoth to take her home. Just before undertaking their search for the South, the narrator reveals, “Los dos comprendieron que, definitivamente, estaban al punto de dejar atrás la infancia que les había unido” (129). The quest, then, becomes the symbolic journey from childhood into adolescence, and their union brings about their death and Orso’s absolution.

When we consider the significance of Aranmanoth and Windumanoth’s names, together they function like micro-legends.⁸ Their names reinforce the ritual motif and their combined allegorical associations form an immediate reference. Aranmanoth’s name means “mes de las espigas,” and his physical description reflects the distinct connection to wheat and to the month in which he was born. The narrator describes Aranmanoth thus: “Orso abrazó a Aranmanoth, y conoció el aroma a trigo de sus largos y dorados cabellos, tan rubios como jamás viera y, acariciándolos con sus dedos, palpó en sus extremos una pequeña trenza. Así era cada mechón, como una delicada espiga” (31-32). As a child of harvest time, the description of the protagonist includes

the smell, color and shape of wheat, which further connects Aranmanoth to the image of bread.

Correspondingly, Windumanoth's name means "mes de las vendimias" and is associated with grapes and wine. As Pérez explains,

Her dark hair, eyes, and skin tones subtly underscore her specific relationship to wine [. . .] 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 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, implying their symbolic equivalence with the sacraments. ("More Than" 504-05)

Just as Aranmanoth's physical appearance reflects the colors of the harvest, summertime and wheat, so too does Windumanoth's countenance convey her intimate ties to fall and to the grape harvest. If we were to imagine the couple side-by-side, according to their textual descriptions, we would assume that Matute creates a pair of opposing forces: Aranmanoth would represent Good, after his light hair and eyes, while Windumanoth would represent Evil for her dark complexion. However, because this is not an apocalyptic novel in which opposite forces collide, Matute creates a pair whose physical description and names function as complements that suggest a perfect union.

Their juxtaposed names, along with their united quest for Windumanoth's homeland, result in the joining of male and female, bread and wine. Although the text never explicitly states that the couple makes love, when they return to Lines the two lie

down in the grass together and the narrator says, “Y se amaban” (163). The narrator also suggests that a sexual encounter takes place between them when they enter the waterfall. The narrator, recalling Orso’s meeting with the water fairy, and describes their encounter thus:

Hacía tanto calor que, sin apenas darse cuenta, se fueron desnudando. Y así, el uno frente al otro, con las manos unidas, se adentraron en la cascada. Se abrazaron bajo el torrente luminoso del agua y descubrieron cuán hermoso y placentero puede llegar a ser un cuerpo amado cuando se acaricia. Conocieron lo que es y será por los siglos de los siglos, el encuentro con la vida, por más que dicho encuentro tenga lugar en un único y fugaz instante. (150)

The narrator’s depiction of the love scene is more like a legendary encounter that transcends time rather than a fleeting moment. The love scene is likewise not eroticized as the couple barely realizes that they are disrobing. The narrator veils all sexual activity in oblique language and in the image of a blinding, pure light. Therefore, when we consider the connotations of their names and the description of this scene, we might interpret the adolescents as forming a holy union, a sacrament, rather than committing a transgression. Their sexual union, then, does not tarnish Aranmanonth’s status as divine redeemer, which is vital to sustaining his legendary appeal.

If we refer to Frye’s idea that the quest may also take on a ritual function, then the quest represents “the victory of fertility over the wasteland. Fertility means food and drink, bread and wine, body and blood, the union of the male and female. The precious objects brought back from the quest, or seen or obtained as a result of it sometimes

combine the ritual and the psychological associations” (193). Matute varies the quest in her third fantasy novel by focusing on its ritualistic nature, as evidenced when Aranmanoth and Windumanoth suddenly forget the object of the quest and instead undergo a rite of passage. Paradoxically, if we consider Frye’s theory, the victorious quest in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* leads to destruction whereas unsuccessful quest of the young couple leads to a victorious fertility over the figurative wasteland. Their union plants the seed for absolution. Without the quest for the South, the peasant’s prophecy about Aranmanoth’s redemption of his father would never have come true. The quest is not only an impetus for Orso’s redemption; it is also the event that makes Orso’s absolution necessary.

In recounting the legend of Aranmanoth’s death, the narrator’s description is replete with symbolism. Apart from the many references to Aranmanoth’s association with the environment, and specifically to wheat, the image of the poppy endows his death with both religious and secular meaning. The narrator says, “Después, iban en busca del Manantial y buscaban en el fondo del agua la cabeza de Aranmanoth, sus cabellos largos como espigas y aquel collar de amapolas que, según decía, era la sangre que brotó de su garganta y el origen de las que, verano tras verano, aparecían en los trigales” (191). As the passage asserts, the poppy represents death and bloodshed, but it also refers to the harvest. According to Christian tradition the red poppy displays in its center a true representation to the Holy Cross. In Christian art, the poppy is used in depictions of the Passion of Christ or as a reference to sleep or death. In the Greek Orthodox Church, crimson poppies represent the blood of Christ on the cross on his journey to Golgotha. In the secular realm, the poppy symbolically recalls

Aranmanoth's name as the Month of the Harvest. The ancient Greeks believed that the poppy species that grew in the corn fields promoted the growth of corn and was therefore dedicated to Ceres, the goddess of harvests, who is usually depicted with wheat-ears and poppy flowers (Deas 76-77).⁹ The legend itself, building on the narrator's characterization of Aranmanoth, strengthens his Christ-like nature and therefore his superiority through religious and secular symbolism. Moreover, by constructing a legend within the novel, we note that as a narrative mechanism, it functions to shape Aranmanoth as a superior being whose celestial and redemptive qualities push the novel further into the realm of fantasy.

Whereas Matute's lyrical style and the incorporation of fairy tales draw in the readers of *La torre vigía* and *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, respectively, in *Aranmanoth* the use of time vis-à-vis the legend stimulates and maintains the reader's interest. Time in the legend recalls the way in which time was calculated during the Medieval period in world history. This is especially pertinent to *Aranmanoth*, given the text's allusion to the legends of Tristan and Isolde, as well as King Arthur.¹⁰ Clute explains the parallels between time in the legend and the Medieval mind thus: "The clocking of the passage of time was understood to be a qualitative endeavor, an effort to explain the significance of the moments, hours and days lived. Time was a form of significant shape, and was often expressed in terms of cycles [rather than linearly] [. . .]. What is significant is a form of *retelling*: the cycle of the seasons [expresses] what counts, what is true and what is to be *found again*" (946). As readers of a legend in a fantasy novel, the circular shape of time in the narrative asks readers to construct and seek meaning from repetition.

In *Aranmanoth* the cycle of time gives rise to meaning, but we must form the architecture of the legend through bits and pieces of information that become more obvious as the novel unfolds and the legend becomes more apparent. Memories are not locked into the past and characters experience memories from a future time that they have yet to live because the legend is constantly retold. Meaning derives, for example, from the constant stream of voices that proliferate in the novel and come from a time other than the present moment.

In the beginning of the novel the young Orso hears the servants speak of a time lost to human memory. He overhears them telling his mother, "Son las voces que pierde el Tiempo en su tejer y destejer al derecho y al revés" (10). Early in the novel we must embrace an other world in which time moves backwards and forwards and voices may be lost only to become found again in time's non-linear movement. Soon after Orso hears the servants, the voices return. When he is a teenager he enters the forest on his way home, after becoming a knight, and the voices he heard as a child rush back to him and convey details from a future time: "'Yo soy Orso, soy Orso, dueño y Señor de Lines...'. Entonces, la voz se retiraba y parecía regresar a un tiempo futuro. Y escuchó el lamento de un niño que decía: 'Padre, perdóname, perdona a tu hijo Aranmanoth...'. Aquellas palabras eran del todo incomprensibles para él" (13). The words are incomprehensible to Orso because at this point he has yet to meet Aranmanoth. Although we do not understand the significance of the voices at the beginning of the novel, they spark our curiosity, and we must quickly begin to cut and paste together the pieces of time and the voices that are captured in its fluidity. We begin to comprehend

more clearly that time in legends involves a retelling of events, which explains how the voice in the passage above may return at a future time.

The uncertainty with which the narrator depicts Aranmanoth and Windumanoth's voyage through the forest also reflects the circularity of time, as they make no progress in reaching the South. The narrator says, "Avanzaban o, quizá, retrocedían. Ellos no lo sabían, ni se daban cuenta de que, a menudo, se encontraban en el mismo lugar por el que días antes pasado" (142). The journey, like time, depicts the couple moving in circles. The more the two advance, the further their destination seems to recede from their reach.

The same confusing notion of time is repeated when the two lovers hold each other after reaching the waterfall. The narrator describes the moment: "Y entonces se tendieron en la hierba, el uno en brazos del otro, y de nuevo se encontraron y sintieron que se conocían, o se reconocían, desde un tiempo tan remoto como nuevo, tan dilatado como fugaz" (151). Recalling Orso's encounter with the water fairy, their union is the culmination of a time that is both past and present, a time that speeds up and slows down. Within the forest lies a range of possibilities in which time is at once ancient and new, and which is symbolized in Windumanoth and Aranmanoth's union. The text suggests that they may have already known each other in a distant time and that they meet each other again in the present of the novel. The textual clues, such as the one above, suggest that this world consists of many dimensions of time in which people may be joined repeatedly. Also, the repetition mimics the story cycle of legends, which replay encounters indefinitely, making their stories past, present and future all at once.

The circularity of time in the legend is most notable when the narrator begins to measure the passage of time in seasons, which is a central part of fantasy writing. As Clute explains:

For many fantasy writers [. . .] the four seasons are normally conceived as aspects of an everlasting cycle, one in which time returns upon itself [. . .]. Any reference to the seasons is likely to carry with it a burden of significance, whether or not precisely articulated. A primal instinct of fantasy writers—which is to attempt to recover original or “true” archetypal patterns normally ensures that [the seasons] uncover and value what is deemed to be the true story. [. . .] It is common for them to reflect the events taking place in the story. (846-47)

Matute takes full advantage of the rich symbolism suggested by the seasons, as they not only echo the circularity of legends when they are repeatedly told for years, but also represent Aranmanoth and Windumanoth’s sexual growth and prefigure the protagonist’s death.

After the couple makes love and leaves the waterfall, suddenly the narrator informs us that it is now summer and the sun burns so brightly that it erases all previous seasons: “El espléndido verano se mecía en los trigales [. . .]. Aquel grandísimo sol que se presentaba como el rey del cielo y de la tierra borraba el recuerdo de la primavera, del otoño y del invierno. Tan sólo existía el verano” (152). Summertime reflects the sexual culmination of the couple and represents a climatic moment in the novel. When the couple realizes the meaning of love, they cease to search for the South. Just as summer erases all other seasons in this moment, so too does their love

erase their initial motivation behind the quest. Also, the season represents a rebirth for Aranmanoth as it is his birth month. Summertime symbolically represents the death of his and Windumanoth's childhood, and it emphasizes his sexual transition. The two characters have entered the adult world and cannot return to the innocence of childhood.

As their journey stretches on and as the summer begins to fade, the narrator continues to describe the passing of time in seasonal terms. The narrator says, "El verano llegaba a su fin, y a pesar de que los días eran todavía calurosos, Aranmanoth and Windumanoth pasaban las noches en aquellos lugares que pudieron protegerles del frescor que anuncia el otoño" (187). Whereas Windumanoth and Aranmanoth's growth into adolescence is expressed by the ripeness of summer, the narrator now employs seasonality to hint at the latter's death. As autumn approaches and the soldiers capture the protagonist informs the reader that Aranmanoth "supo que, definitivamente, el Mes de las Espigas había terminado" (188). Just as the cold of the fall kills summer, so too will he inevitably be slain. If Summer represents the height of their love and the culmination of their union, then we realize that the young couple's relationship, like Summer, is also doomed to end.

Although his death, which is linked to the nature of the seasons, is near, the narrator reminds us of the nature of legends. Presumably, even though Aranmanoth must die, his story will be recounted endlessly as the legend is passed down year after year, season after season. Time in the novel extends beyond his death, as the legend continues to be told in this other world by the inhabitants of Lines, which distinguishes this novel from *La torre vigía* and *Olvidado Rey Gudú*. In the first two novels of the

trilogy, time presumably ends with apocalyptic conclusions. Here, because of the creation of a legend within the novel, time is presented as being just as indefinite as the number of times Aranmanoth's story may be retold.

While the cyclical nature of time in the legend perpetuates readerly intrigue and involvement in an other world, Matute also harnesses the legend's inherent ability to convey social meaning. In other words, according to Clute, "Legends are such a backbone of a culture's belief that they are also essential to any secondary world " (571-72). Without social commentary, the legend would not be complete. Within the legend that Matute creates, we find a belief system that becomes evident primarily through the characterization of Aranmanoth and Orso. Their experiences and actions serve as the basis for an ideology that permeates the novel. In *Aranmanoth* Matute uses the legend to explore dichotomies, division, and duality.

Aranmanoth stands as an example of a larger moral message because in a legendary figure who is semi-divine, we are offered a distanced discernment on human nature. Because he is not entirely human, his partially detached view on the human race allows for greater reflection. His portrayal lends insight into the dichotomies of human behavior.

As a magical being with a human heart, he struggles to come to grips with the good and the bad that he sees in human behavior, and his struggle allows for the social commentary that is constructed within the legend. As an example, when Aranmanoth enters the innermost sanctum of the forest and halts the sacrifice of a young girl by hedonistic men and women, he is horrified and shocked by what he sees. This

experience shows him how treacherous and beastly human beings can be when overcome by desire. The narrator describes Aranmanoth's discovery:

Pero—y esto Aranmanoth lo sintió como una revelación—[los hombres y las mujeres] no eran más que criaturas que deseaban, que solamente deseaban. Acaso algunos no sabían qué, y otros puede que sí, pero aquella extraña imagen representaba, ante los ojos de Aranmanoth, la confusión, el terror y la soledad de la especie humana. Habían llegado hasta allí deseando, nada más que deseando. (100)

After saving the girl's life, Aranmanoth realizes his own double nature and fears his human side. He observes the uncivilized, lonely and terrible dimension of humankind and breaks into tears when he realizes that this is part of his own constitution.

Although the forest reveals the darkest secrets of the human heart, the kindness of the human spirit that Aranmanoth discovers in his journey with Windumanoth is in direct contrast to the atrocity he witnesses in the forest. Matute incorporates the couple's quest for the South as a metaphor for Aranmanoth's own journey of understanding the complexities of human emotion. On the way back to Lines, the companions pass the night with villagers who lost everything when their homes were burned to the ground by order of the Count. The narrator describes the spirit of these people thus:

Todos aquellos hombres y mujeres se sentían unidos por su destino incierto. Y esa unión se percibía en el aire que respiraban. Descansaban alrededor de una pequeña hoguera y se miraban los unos a los otros como sólo pueden hacerlo aquellos que comparten un sentimiento, o

incluso un sueño. La huída, el temor y la misma muerte enlazaban a aquellas personas que se comprendían e intentaban ayudarse. La amistad hacía que aparecieran sonrisas en aquellos rostros cansados y que se escucharan voces, incluso algunas canciones, en las que aún quedaban rastros de alegría. Se podía respirar un nuevo olor que nada tenía que ver con el de la muerte o la miseria, y ese olor hacía que aquellas noches resultaran cálidas y hermosas, a pesar de la devastación y el dolor causados por los soldados del Conde. (162)

The generous spirit of the poor reveals a better side of human nature when compared to the sacrifice that Aranmanoth prevents in the forest. Because he witnesses this dichotomy in behavior, he begins to form his own ideals. As he learns that duality exists within everyone, he comprehends (and we along with him) that this is not an other world made up of absolutes and extremes; rather, it is an intricate society that is sometimes civil and sometimes barbarous, much like our own. Aranmanoth voices his epiphany when he says, “La parte humana de mi naturaleza es tan hermosa como horrible” (159). Not only do we observe varying degrees of humanity in the novel, but we also observe that in this society sometimes the rich and powerful, who should exemplify nobility, abuse the poor and that the impoverished are sometimes the richest in spirit.

The portrayal of Orso further develops the belief system that Matute constructs in the legend. Just as Aranmanoth comes to terms with his own double nature, so too do we see a division in his father that will later manifest physically. Orso has a conscience, which is essential to the novel. If Orso did not know right from wrong, then the novel

would not produce dramatic tension or evoke an emotional response in the reader. Because we see that Orso is not entirely a villain, we feel compassion for him.

A vital element in establishing Orso as a dynamic character who has a conscience occurs early in the narrative when we learn that as he grows older, Orso begins to resemble his father, who presided over Lines and over Orso with an iron fist. According to the narrator, Orso changed shortly after his father died and inherited the title of Lord of Lines:

poco a poco su carácter y su comportamiento fueron transformándose. [. . .] Y llegó el día en que el parecido con su padre era tal que familiares, campesinos y siervos llegaron a confundirle con él. A veces, alguna anciana, hilando en su rueca, decía: [. . .] “Orso era un niño hermoso, bueno. [. . .] Pero el tiempo le ha vuelto oscuro y fiero, y poco recuerda a aquel niño que, algunas veces, venía a pedirme que le contara la leyenda del hada del Manantial. Ahora es el Señor de Lines y apenas se diferencia de su padre.” (27)

Here Matute comments on the fabric of a society that stops listening to legends and believing in fairies. We learn that becoming a Lord and entering the adult world is synonymous with losing the goodness of childhood. In this passage, Matute also points out that she is constructing a set of meanings within the legend of Aranmanoth by referring to the legend of the water fairy within the overarching legend that we are reading. Perhaps she does this in an attempt to show how fantasy can act like a mirror that causes us to reflect on our own world.

The scar on Orso's face serves as another mirror when Aranmanoth first sees his father's wound. Like Aranmanoth, Orso is divided. The narrator describes Aranmanoth's reaction upon seeing his father's scar for the first time, when Orso returns from a mission led by the Count:

Era tan solo una cicatriz, pero para Aranmanoth fue un doloroso descubrimiento. Había algo en ellas que le desvelaba la naturaleza humana, mucho más misteriosa e incomprensible de cuanto hasta entonces había creído. Aquella cicatriz dividía en dos el rostro de su padre, y las dos mitades parecían enfrentarse. Aranmanoth le amaba, y una parte de su cara le arrastraba hacia ese amor; pero también—y ahora se daba cuenta—le temía. (111)

Not coincidentally, this scene divides the book in half, as it is the seventh chapter of fourteen. The scar that separates the father's face into two halves symbolizes the changes taking place within the son, and how Aranmanoth perceives his father differently as a result Orso's scar is a constant reminder of his own internal struggle.

The narrator observes, "Orso palpó suavemente sus mejillas y sintió la rugosa cicatriz que le cruzaba el rostro [. . .] ¿qué he hecho con mi juventud?, ¿a qué o a quién la he entregado?" (181). His corruption is as palpable as the scar on his face. He literally feels the war taking place within his conscience, a war that has now manifested itself physically. He questions the Count's judgment and his own existence. It is a turning point in his life and eventually leads to his decision in favor of self-exile.

Orso not only betrays the people he is supposed to protect and serve as a knight, but he also admittedly betrays himself by allowing the Count to have his son and wife

murdered. The way in which Orso is characterized allows us to better understand why Orso feels that he betrays himself in the end. The narrator reveals:

Orso se había educado y preparado para ser un caballero y, desde niño, sabía que la traición suponía una mancha imborrable, imposible de limpiar. [. . .] Aquella mañana, Orso descubrió que la verdadera traición que él temía era secreta e inconfesable: la traición a sí mismo. (169-70)

As a knight his behavior should be exemplary, yet ironically both he and the Count are less noble than the humble peasants whose villages they burn. We learn that although society prepares Orso to become a member of the noble class, his true nature does not agree with the belief system that governs Lines. Like the two sides of his face that appear to confront one another, Orso is at conflict with himself. The narrator allows the reader to better understand his discord by letting us know that, as early as adolescence, he never believed in what he was learning as an apprentice. The narrator says that Orso “recordó el tiempo que pasó en el castillo del Conde, su duro aprendizaje, los castigos y las leyes que debía respetar y que, sin embargo, nunca llegó a comprender” (170). Because the narrator provides us with a window into Orso’s conscience, we witness a series of values within the legend that present the chivalric code as something incomprehensible. It is also key to understanding why Orso believes that he has betrayed himself. Instead of following his heart, he follows the rules of a society that he respects but never understands.

Matute’s critique of the practices of the nobility becomes even more obvious through Orso’s actions. Rather than continue to live his life under the Count’s rule, he prefers to exile himself from a society in which recovering one’s honor means murdering

one's own family. By creating a character of noble rank who removes himself from society and then punishes himself during the rest of his life, Matute criticizes the chivalric code. As a knight, Orso is aware of the perversion of honor and will no longer subject himself to the Count's rule.

The narrator's position vis-à-vis the legend offers commentary on the principles that govern Lines. S/he reveals Orso's fate and says, "Orso se retiró a una ermita que, según cuentan, levantó con sus propios manos. Y allí paso el resto de sus días, solo y en absoluto silencio, sin nada a su alrededor que le recordara la dolorosa y cruel existencia que había llevado" (190). This passage indicates a shift in the narrator's perspective. When the narrator says "según cuentan," s/he becomes part of the chain of storytelling. Matute's narrator becomes a meta-narrator who is intricately woven into the fabric of the story. The creation of a meta-narrator also reinforces the artificiality of the legend in that whatever s/he retells becomes the true story, or the story that is the most meaningful, if we recall Clute. In this case, we learn that an individual with a conscience, who does not agree with the chivalric code, cannot be incorporated into his society. Orso exiles himself because, like Aranmanoth, he does not belong in this world.

Like *La torre vigía* and *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, *Aranmanoth* causes us to reflect on our world when we consider the social commentary that is evident in the legend. As a parallel example, Armitt explains how the Arthurian legend leads to the contemplation of our reality:

One of the reasons *Lord of the Rings* allows for such reinterpretations is that its vast cartographic canvas (another version of elongation) opens across epic space in the same way that *Star Wars* opens across outer

space, or Arthur opens across time. Like the Arthurian tales, it is specific enough in its vision of heroism, comradeship and corruption to mirror the world we know. (10)

The harnessing of fantasy literature's mirroring capacity to reflect its audience therefore allows us to reflect on the message within the legend. Like the Arthurian tales, the legend of Aranmanoth continues and changes over time. In her legend, Matute not only shows a change in the audience who hears Aranmanoth's story, but she also modifies how the legend is received through the years.

The role of the poet is important here because he is responsible for keeping the legend alive. Although two innocent youths are executed at the end of *Aranmanoth*, the conclusion vis-à-vis the legend proves to be a much more idealistic one, in part because Matute does not dissolve the other world that she creates. In *Aranmanoth* several references prove that the legend, and therefore the other world of Lines, survives. The narrator reveals that the unnamed poet returns to Lines and recounts Aranmanoth's story: "Y un día regresó a las tierras de Lines el muchacho de los ojos negros, cantando y narrando la historia de Aranmanoth, 'el niño sagrado que había redimido a su padre de sus pecados,' decía" (190). Long after he is murdered, Aranmanoth's story continues to be told, perhaps by the poet's son, as the text suggests. In the next line the narrator informs us that another poet with black eyes arrives: "Pasaron años, muchos años, y otro joven poeta de ojos negros llegó hasta aquel lugar" (190). The narrator's emphasis on *muchos* to mark the number of years that have passed and *otro* to underscore that this is not the same poet we met earlier in the novel accentuates the persistence of the legend. We are made acutely aware that the legend survives beyond Aranmanoth's

time. One must assume that because poets recite stories instead of writing them, perhaps the second poet did not retell the legend in the exactly the same way as his predecessor and the details of the story may have varied slightly between the two. This is why Matute invites the narrator to continue the story years after Aranmanoth's death. By adding several accounts of the legend long after the protagonist's death, she not only fulfills the ongoing cycle of storytelling that is inherent to legends, but she also addresses the legend's capacity to reflect its listeners and/or readers.

The text corroborates the notion that the reception of a legend may change as its audience changes in the narrator's description of the villagers' reaction to the legend. After Aranmanoth's death, the poet who knew him returns to Lines to tell that story, but no one believes him. The narrator says, "Las gentes le escuchaban atentas, pero lo cierto es que nadie creyó, hasta mucho tiempo después" (190). When the second poet arrives in Lines several years later the narrator informs us that "Y esta vez, los que escucharon la historia de Aranmanoth se quedaron cautivados y atónitos ante las palabras del joven. '¿Será cierto lo que este hombre cuenta?', se preguntaban los unos a los otros" (190-91). Years pass and the legend begins to grow, perhaps as a sign that people are beginning either to believe in the legend or they are curious enough to retell the story. If they were not, the legend would not survive. The narrator continues to comment on the popularity of the story:

Y fue creciendo la canción, y las romerías que surgieron tras ella. Los jóvenes se acercaban al Manantial durante el Mes de las Espigas y creían ver la cabeza rubia de Aranmanoth bajo las aguas. Pero no era verdad.

Casi nadie pudo verla; tan sólo aquellos que habían amado, o amaban, o estaban deseosos de amar alguna vez en su vida. (191)

Not only do we have textual proof that his story is passed down, we also notice a change, from people not believing in the story to people wanting to believe it and searching for Aranmanoth's head. Also, we note that the narrator informs us that although the villagers listen to the legend, it is the youth who seek to prove its veracity. Moreover, only those who know love or want to love are able to see Aranmanoth's head in the bottom of the waterfall. In a sense, the title character dies because of love and therefore becomes a legendary figure. This is why young people seek him in the bottom of the waterfall; they search for hope and want to experience love.

Although the ending is far from happy, I would argue that it is Matute's version of an antidote to the apocalyptic endings of the previous novels. The legend of Aranmanoth distinguishes the novel from *Olvidado Rey Gudú* and *La torre vigía* because, unlike the nameless protagonist of *La torre vigía* and *Gudú*, in *Aranmanoth* not only does the legend of Aranmanoth continue indefinitely, the message is much more idealistic. Matute does not entirely condemn humankind in her third fantasy novel. Rather, she presents a more forgiving portrait of humanity, especially when we consider the great Tree of the forest in the novel to be allegorical. Not coincidentally, the tree is located in the heart of the forest, which also reveals the heart of the values within the legend. When the poet guides Aranmanoth into the depths of the forest, he introduces him to the Tree:

Era el Árbol, el Gran Señor del Bosque, el Viejo, el antiquísimo Señor.
Paciente, sabio y erguido en su ancianidad, contra y a favor de las

humanas criaturas. Era el Árbol que algunos llamaban del Bien y del Mal, aquel que otros decían el Árbol de la vida, el árbol que muchos amaban como sólo se puede amar un viejo deseo. [. . .] En el se depositan todos los deseos, la ira, el amor y la desesperación de los humanos. Pero también la esperanza. (98-99).

Perhaps the Tree is the backbone of the belief system that Matute creates. Because Aranmanoth struggles with his duality, the Tree serves to teach him the complexities of the human condition and that his human heart is not necessarily completely evil.

Perhaps the personification of the Tree is a way to connect with the readers. In humanizing nature, we learn a lesson about humanity and life. Although we are capable of great anger, desperation, excessive desire and hatred, we are equally able to love and to hope. As denoted in the text, hope stands alone. It is the only emotion that is contained in its own brief sentence of “Pero también la esperanza” and therefore bears more weight than the previous sentences in the quoted section. Although we have the capacity to love, as the tree suggests, maybe hope outweighs even this capacity.

The legend within the novel reminds us that the human spirit is complex and dynamic, equally capable of great acts of kindness and horrific acts of cruelty. But when we return to the reason for the creation of a legend within a fantasy narrative, perhaps Matute asks us to believe again, just as we did when we were children—when legendary figures lifted themselves out of the books we read and lived in our imaginations. When we grow up, we no longer believe in the imaginary worlds that captivated us in childhood, and we limit ourselves concerning what is possible. As a mirror for our own world, Matute comments on the lack of hope and dreams that may

come with adulthood. The novel concludes with the following lines: “Aranmanoth se convirtió con los años en una leyenda. Pero lo cierto es que alguna vez, un muchacho, o una muchacha, lo distingue entre las aguas. Son sólo unos pocos, aquellos que aún viven en el ardiente, cegador y breve—demasiado breve—verano de la vida” (191). In these lines, Matute prompts us to recapture the summer of our own lives and believe in love and hope again, just as we did when we were adolescents.

NOTES

1 While some critics consider Windumanoth to be a co-protagonist, I choose to view Aranmanoth as the sole protagonist. From the beginning of the novel, and even before he is born, he becomes the central character who spurs on the plot. In addition, he is the title character of the novel and the legend is named only after him.

2 The *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines a legend as the following:
 A story or group of stories handed down through popular oral tradition, usually consisting of an exaggerated or unreliable account of some actual or possible historical person--often a saint, monarch, or popular hero. Legends are sometimes distinguished from myths in that they concern human beings rather than gods, and sometimes in that they have some sort of historical basis whereas myths do not; but these distinctions are difficult to maintain consistently. The term was originally applied to accounts of saints' lives, but is now applied chiefly to fanciful tales of warriors (e.g. King Arthur and his knights), criminals (e.g. Faust, Robin Hood), and other sinners; or more recently to those bodies of biographical rumour and embroidered anecdote surrounding dead film stars and rock musicians (Judy Garland, John Lennon, etc.). (185)

3 *Aranmanoth* appears in blogs dedicated to literature, such as the following: Carmel Bachillerato (<http://carmel1bachillerato.nireblog.com/post/2009/01/20/aranmanoth>) and Poemas del alma (<http://www.poemas-del-alma.com/blog/libros/aranmanoth-de-ana-maria-matute>). The novel is also referenced in on-line literary forums like Abretelibro (<http://www.abretelibro.com/foro/viewtopic.php?t=31269>) and Lecturalia (<http://www.lecturalia.com/libro/4716/aranmanoth>).

4 I thank Prof. Núria Silleras-Fernández for her guidance concerning the *cantar de gesta*.

5 See Alvar pp. 12-26 for a more complete discussion of the medieval epic poem and the *cantar de gesta*.

6 Armitz notes that the legend of King Arthur is not based on any historical person, which gives rise to the various renditions of the legend. In addition, she states that this lack of historical specificity is a feature of epic fantasy in general (8-10).

7 The forest is a central setting throughout the novel and is presented as a magical place in which remarkable events may occur. The forest heavily influenced Matute in that she spent a great deal of time in the forest of Mansilla de la Sierra, located in the Rioja region north of Madrid, when she was a little girl and was sent to stay with her grandparents. In the speech that she gave to the members of the Real Academia Española in January 1998, she stated that this setting inspired her writing career and she linked words in general with the forest. To her, ants appeared like small

letters scrawled across the pages, revealing an other world before her eyes. When she read the word “forest” in books, she knew she would always work with words, which revealed an alternate existence to her. Just like the forest offered an alternate reality, she wanted to create other worlds with words. This notion manifests itself directly when Aranmanoth explains to Windumanoth that the forest has its own language. He says, “Cada hoja es una palabra, y cada palabra corresponde a un color. Son palabras que no están escritas en ninguna parte, ni siquiera en los libros que guardan los monasterios. Todas las palabras juntas, todos los colores unidos, forman un arco iris. Será nuestro secreto” (75).

8 The names Aranmanoth and Windumanoth derive from Charlemagne, who was the King of the Franks (c.768) and Emperor of the Romans (800-814). Charlemagne became Emperor in 800 and created a grammar of his native language, Frankish. One of Charlemagne’s educated servants, a man known only as Einhard, supposedly authored *Life of Charlemagne*. Today the descendents of the Franks are modern Dutch-speakers. Einhard named the months in his own tongue, instead of using Latin or the barbarous names employed by the Franks: Wintarmanoth (January); Hornung (February); Lentzinmanoth (March); Ostarmanoth (April); Winnemanoth (May); Brachmanoth (June); Heuvimanoth (July); Aranmanoth (August); Witumanoth (September); Windumemanoth (October); Herbistmanoth (November); Heilagmanoth (December). In the footnotes to his book, Einard observes that Aranmanoth is “Ears (of grain) month” while Windumemanoth means “Vintage month” (67-68).

9 Lizzie Deas explains, in *Flower Favourites: Their Legends, Symbolism and Significance*, that according to an early Christian legend about saints, , after Holy Maid Margaret killed a dragon, poppies sprang from its blood (78). According to Greek mythology, the Greek goddess of the harvest, Demeter, created the poppy as a means of getting some sleep after the loss of her dear daughter, Persephone. Also, the twin brothers Hypnos and Thanatos (the gods of sleep and death) are typically represented as crowned with poppies or carrying poppies in their hands.

10 The legend of Aranmanoth most closely parallels two legends that center on love triangles: the legend of Tristan and Iseult and the legend of King Arthur and Guinevere. In the legend of Tristan and Iseult, King Mark eventually discovers the adulterous relationship between his nephew and his wife and resolves to punish them. Tristan will be executed by hanging and Iseult must be put to trial. Tristan escapes and rescues Iseult who was imprisoned in a leper colony. The two run away into the forest until King Mark finds them. When they make peace with King Mark, Tristan agrees to return Iseult to his uncle, and he leaves the country. Tristan later travels to Brittany where he marries the daughter of Hoel of Brittany, Iseult of the White Hands, because of her name and beauty.

We may also note a correlation between the legend of Aranmanoth and the legend of King Arthur, especially if we consider Chrétien de Troyes’ version *Le Chevalier de la Charrette*, in which Lancelot becomes the protagonist. According to *The Cambridge Companion to the Arthurian Legend* (2009), in Troyes’ rendition

Lancelot is portrayed as the bravest of all the knights, and his saintly characterization, like that of Aranmanoth, sustains his chivalric image even after his affair with Queen Guinevere. In addition, the Lady of the Lake, a magical being, raises Lancelot, much like Aranmanoth's mother, a water fairy, nurtures her son during his early years. When Lancelot and Aranmanoth are older, they are both sent to live with a father or father figure; the Lady of the Lake delivers Lancelot to Arthur's court to become a knight while Aranmanoth's mother sends him to be reared by his father, Orso (McCracken 188-89).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The publication of *La torre vigía* in 1971 sparked a literary turning point in Ana María Matute's career that would extend for more than thirty years. She left behind her well-known and highly acclaimed body of work, which consisted of "social realist" novels and short stories, in favor of novels written entirely in the mode of fantasy. *La torre vigía*, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* and *Aranmanoth* comprise a trilogy that explores various fantasy elements and takes place in other worlds in which fairies, princesses, ogres, elves, wizards and human beings coexist. In addition, these texts incorporate older literary forms such as the saga, the fairy tale, the epic poem and the legend into the genre of the novel. When we consider the trilogy as a whole, we can clearly see that Matute evolved as a fantasy writer, constantly building from one novel to the next.

In the Introduction I discussed certain premises of fantasy that characterize Matute's trilogy. I followed Frye's theory of modes, which allows us to categorize each text along the spectrum from realism to fantasy according to the protagonist's relationship to other characters and to his/her surroundings. When we implement Frye's theory with regard to Matute's novels we undoubtedly see that each protagonist is superior to the other characters and to his environment. Each protagonist, however,

varies in the degree of superiority he personifies, and if we examine all three main characters, an evolution occurs.

From *La torre vigía* to *Olvidado Rey Gudú* and ending with *Aranmanoth*, we notice that the protagonist becomes increasingly superior and therefore pushes the text closer towards the fantasy mode and away from the mode of realism. In *La torre vigía*, the nameless protagonist is a “chosen one” who is deemed morally better than the other characters in the novel because of his messianic traits. Moreover, he is superior to his environment because even after he is killed, he lives on to narrate his story. His posthumous narration also distinguishes *La torre vigía* from the other two novels in that this is the only text in which the protagonist narrates his own story, thereby limiting our access to the other world as his is the only account through which we may experience that world.

By contrast, *Olvidado Rey Gudú* is told by an omniscient narrator, which allows us to explore five generations of a dynastic reign and the inception, expansion and dissolution of a mighty kingdom. The grand scope of the novel contributes to elevating the status of the protagonist above that of the nameless narrator in *La torre vigía*. Although Gudú is compared to all the other characters in a novel that spans over 750 pages, his superiority goes undisputed. He is a king, which makes him superior to other characters of lower rank, but he is also another “chosen one.” When he vanquishes the people from the legendary region that instilled fear in both his forefathers and his contemporaries, he becomes greater than his predecessors. Gudú’s destiny is higher than those of all other characters in that his success is bound up with the future of the kingdom, and his fate also determines the fate of an entire empire.

Aranmanoth, the title character and protagonist of the final novel of the trilogy, is the most elevated of the three protagonists. He is also “sacred” but his characteristics are more closely aligned to Christ than the other two main characters. He alone possesses special powers because of his double nature as a part-magical, part-human being. His magical qualities not only make him extraordinary, but his destiny reinforces his eminent status when he fulfills his role as a redeemer who atones for his father’s sins. His murder at the conclusion of the novel places him above the other protagonists in that his life saves another’s and his death is the only one that becomes legendary. By contrast, Gudú dissolves into oblivion along with the entire other world that Matute creates. In addition, although the nameless protagonist of *La torre vigía* lives on (in one sense) past death, he is responsible for the retelling of his own story whereas Aranmanoth survives through the voices of others who continue to recount his tale.

While the protagonists aid us in determining one way in which the trilogy belongs to the mode of fantasy, Matute’s creation of a pact with the reader is also an essential part of a successful fantasy novel. With each text, Matute varies her strategy of luring us into, and encouraging us to remain in, these seemingly impossible worlds. In *La torre vigía* her lyrical style prods readers to embrace the other world infused with abuse and loneliness, which might otherwise repel an audience. While there are notable lyrical passages describing the Kingdom of Olar in *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, the incorporation of fairy tales captivates the reader and provides a brief reprieve from the destruction and conflict that comprise most of the novel. Matute’s allusions to famous fairy tales, such as *Snow White* and *The Little Mermaid*, encourage readers to imagine their childhoods. In *Aranmanoth*, the creation of a legend within the novel sustains readerly intrigue. If we

analyze how Matute involves her reader in these fantasy worlds, we see that she has, with each consecutive novel, constructed more ways in which we might continue to play “let’s pretend.”

Even though we see an evolution throughout the trilogy, Matute’s driving aesthetic is the thread that ties the trilogy together. In these other worlds that act as a mirror for our own reality, she continues to investigate her hallmark themes such as social injustice and inequality. In *La torre vigía*, she defends the weak and the exploited; in *Olvidado Rey Gudú* she criticizes political conflict and shows the consequences of greed; in *Aranmanoth* she questions the notion of honor and the duplicity of human nature.

Although each novel serves as platform for social criticism, the conclusions of each novel vary. When we consider the different endings of each text, we witness a transition from a sense of an ending in *La torre vigía*, to oblivion in *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, and finally to infinitude in the legend of *Aranmanoth*. We observe a shift from the grim and hopeless environments of the first two novels to a slightly more optimistic conclusion with the endless recounting of *Aranmanoth*’s story, which urges us to believe in love and hope.

Each of the aforementioned premises, which I have examined in my dissertation, is supported in the trilogy. Other possible links remain to be developed. First, the trilogy’s strong medieval subtext provides an underlying allegorical framework, common to medieval texts, which helps to glue the trilogy together and embeds the novels with more meaning. Allegory surfaces in the names, actions and composition of various characters throughout Matute’s fantasy trilogy. For example, in *La torre vigía* Matute

subverts the concept of chivalry through allegory by creating a Baron and Baroness who are viewed as ogres by the protagonist. Because this is fantasy, they are not metaphorical monsters; in fantasy we accept that they actually *are* monsters, and therefore Matute's criticism of the noble class becomes even more acute. In addition, if we recall the origins of ogres, which relates to the myth of Saturn who devoured his newborn children, we recall the underlying idea of destruction as the outcome of creation.¹ The Baron and Baroness are not only monsters who defile innocent youth, but because they are ogres, they may also symbolically portend the quasi-apocalyptic ending of the novel.

Similarly, in *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, the names of the characters serve as a guide and an immediate reference concerning their nature and/or function, as I discussed in Chapter III. In *Aranmanoth*, allegory also plays an important role in establishing the title character's superiority as redeemer, especially when we consider his name in conjunction with Windumanoth's name, as previously mentioned. Throughout the trilogy, then, we note the allegorical connection between names and actions.

Matute uses allegory to engage the reader's intellect, create satire, and ground the novels with a sense of morality, but I would argue that Matute is interested in more than presenting neatly packaged morals in which right and wrong are clearly defined. Instead, Matute explores human nature and shows growth through experience in fantasy.

For example, when we encounter a villain who is entirely wicked and possesses no qualities other than hideousness or baseness, then evil becomes too transparent and loses its impact (Timmerman 32). In successful fantasy, the author must strive to

create an evil force that is formidable. Correspondingly, the hero must not be completely flawless or without weakness, and s/he must manage to learn something from the conflict with evil. This dynamic is what makes the struggle between the two forces engaging. In each of Matute's fantasy novels, the battle between Good and Evil never loses our attention as the antagonists are not static villains, and the protagonists are not superheroes who always triumph.

As an example, in *La torre vigía*, evil is embodied by ogres who are at times just as nurturing as they are cruel, while the protagonist's crude appearance and lack of refinement blemish his heroic characterization. In *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, the antagonist Urdska displays a bravery and fierceness that make her an intimidating enemy who is a suitable opponent for Gudú. On the other hand, Gudú's greed and ambition detracts from his heroism. In *Aranmanoth*, because of Orso's loving nature as a father in the beginning of the novel, we do not view him as entirely malevolent even though he allows for the execution of his wife and son. Accordingly, we perceive Aranmanoth's celestial side as tainted by his human half when he uncovers the desiring nature of human beings in the forest which also permeates his relationship with Windumanoth.

The protagonist display flaws that take away from their heroic characterizations, but they also share a sense of not belonging, which makes their portrayals more convincing as heroes. By nature, heroes do not fit in with the status quo. The narrator of *La torre vigía* is an outcast in society and in his own family not only because of his innocent and kind nature, but also because of his hideous appearance and because he does not resemble his brothers or his father; Gudú's status as King isolates him rather than integrates him into society because he is the most royal and powerful figure in the

kingdom; Aranmanoth's celestial appearance and magical powers separate him from the rest of the people in Lines. Matute's trilogy is replete with heroes and foes who are more than allegorical absolutes who embody good or bad, right or wrong. Rather, they represent a spectrum of behavior and characteristics that enrich the novels and denote successful fantasy.

For Matute, fantasy is more than good presiding over evil; her novels portray the human experience, which is messy and not always clearly defined by right or wrong. According to Timmerman, "Fantasy seeks the undefinable; its subject is nothing less than the human spirit. This, in part, accounts for its powerful impact. Fantasy is never content with objective testimony to pragmatic reality; instead, it explores the world of humankind" (3). Through her trilogy, Matute takes us along on a journey that may challenge our notions about the limitations of space and/or time, mortality, morality and the physical confinement to one body or one species. Her novels deal in the unknowable and offer up a continual challenge that may shape our own thinking.

Fantasy is not only about challenging us as readers, but about challenging the act of writing fiction. By reinvigorating the fairy tale, the legend, the saga and the epic poem Matute emphasizes the art of writing, which contributes to her contemporaneity. Attebery explains: "So it seems the Postmodernist prospectus [. . .] involves a return to early narrative forms—the fairy tale movements and mythic structures that never really disappeared from more popular forms of literature—but with an awareness of their artificiality" (40). Through the art(ifice) of contemporary fantasy, Matute skillfully constructs a trilogy that demonstrates her ability to shift successfully from one mode to the other (from the realism of her earlier career to her latest fantasy novels), which few

authors achieve. I believe this is why, in part, Matute was awarded the long over-due Premio Cervantes in 2010.

While Matute addresses the artifice of literature through the writing or re-writing of older narrative forms, she also writes in order to connect human beings to one another, which is also why she may have been awarded one of the most prestigious literary prizes in Spain. In her 1998 speech to the Real Academia Matute describes the link between understanding ourselves and understanding others through writing. She says that writing is:

Una búsqueda, sin duda. Y, a veces, hasta feroz. Algo parecido a una incesante persecución de la presa más huidiza: uno mismo. Esta búsqueda del reducto interior, esta desesperada esperanza de un remoto reencuentro con nuestro “yo” más íntimo, no es sino el intento de ir más allá de la propia vida, de estar en las otras vidas, el patético deseo de llegar a comprender no solamente la palabra “semejante”, que ya es una tarea realmente ardua, sino entender la palabra “otro”. (“En el bosque”)

Through her fantasy novels I believe that Matute obtains her goal of directing us to find ourselves and, in doing so, to connect to one another. By subverting the eucatastrophic endings proposed by Tolkien, she aims for us to understand “the other.” The less-than-happy endings of the novel connect the trilogy, but they also bring us together through her writing.

Perhaps the conclusions of her novels, which offer neither a clear solution to the conflict of Good and Evil nor a joyous exit, explain the popularity of the trilogy. Not only do they come at a time when fantasy is at a peak worldwide, given the explosion of films

and literature in the fantasy mode over the past two decades, but her novels also have appeared at a time when there seems to be no clear resolution or end to the conflict and natural disasters that surround us. By presenting other worlds that are set within a medieval context, perhaps Matute is suggesting that we may still be living in the Dark Ages. Yet the sinister events that challenge and threaten us also bring us together. For example, we might recall the global relief effort for victims of the Haitian earthquake, the global mission to end world hunger, or more recently, the millions of Egyptian citizens who protested in Tahrir Square. In Matute's novels, just as in life, the human heart and the ability to love are the common denominators. In *La torre vigía* the narrator chooses peace over conflict when he decides that he is not a warrior and dies at the hands of his brothers. In *Olvidado Rey Gudú*, the protagonist breaks the curse under which he has been his whole life when he finally learns to love himself. In the third novel, Aranmanoth learns that love redeems human cruelty.

Fantasy creates alternative visions that shed light on reality, either positively or negatively. Matute's vision, although dark and without any direct windows to happiness, becomes somewhat brighter when we find that the meaning of and the capacity to love join the novels together. If Matute's goal of writing is to develop the connections between us and others, then her trilogy also shows us that our ability to love links us to one another.

I believe any reader of fantasy would categorize Matute's trilogy as monumental. As Armitt notes, the best fantasy literature combines philosophical ambition with creative intoxication (197). Matute's fantasy novels live up to this standard through her masterful reinvigoration and incorporation of older narrative forms within the genre of

the novel, and her social commitment to the process by which human beings understand themselves and therefore each other.

NOTE

1 Pérez has noted this connection in her article “Apocalipsis y milenio, cuentos de hadas y caballerías en las últimas obras de Ana María Matute” (47). In addition, in Juan Eduardo Cirlot’s *Dictionary of Symbols* (1961), he suggests that the ogre might personify the “Terrible Father” who destroys everything that he creates (242-43).

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