

SEEKING THE COURAGE TO STAND: THREE POST-CIVIL WAR «COMING OF AGE» NOVELS (*CRÓNICA DEL ALBA*, *EL CAMINO*, *PRIMERA MEMORIA*)

MICHAEL D. THOMAS
BAYLOR UNIVERSITY (WACO, TEXAS, USA)

Resumen: Las novelas analizadas describen la realidad de la posguerra a través de los ojos de niños y adolescentes: Pepe Garcés en *Crónica del alba* (1942) por Ramón Sender; Daniel «El Mochuelo», en *El camino* (1950), por Miguel Delibes; y Matia y Borja en *Primera Memoria* (1960), por Ana María Matute. Cada novelista retrata valores y virtudes específicas y sus contrarios polares: (1) amor y compasión contra odio y venganza, y (2) valor y fortaleza de espíritu contra traición y cobardía. En sus narraciones, los autores evocan el período vulnerable en el cual se forma la identidad personal. Los protagonistas buscan y encuentran el valor de oponerse a la opresión y de protestar verbalmente contra la injusticia. Cada obra estudiada se enfoca en ciertos jóvenes, que debido a conflictos familiares maduran emocionalmente: progresan desde el egocentrismo infantil a la preocupación por «el otro». Encuentran el valor para rebelarse contra las «normas» establecidas por el mundo de los adultos. Aunque jóvenes, exhiben «el valor de mantenerse firme contra el mal».

Palabras clave: Sender, *Crónica del alba*, Delibes, *El camino*, Matute, *Primera memoria*, bildungsroman, maduración, valores, niños, jóvenes, post-guerra

Abstract: The writers featured describe post-war reality through the eyes of children and young adolescents: Pepe Garcés in Sender's *Crónica del alba* (1942), Daniel «El Mochuelo» in Delibes' *El camino* (1950), and Matia and Borja in Matute's *Primera memoria* (1960). Each novelist portrays specific values and virtues and their polar opposites: (1) love and compassion vs. hate and revenge, and (2) courage and fortitude vs. betrayal and cowardice. In their narratives, the authors write about the vulnerable time in which personal identity is formed. The protagonists seek and find the courage to resist oppression and the courage to speak out against injustice. Each work studied here focuses on young people who because of personal conflicts move from childish self-centeredness to care for «the other.» They find the bravery to rebel against the «norms» established by the adult world. At an early age, they exhibit «the courage to stand».

Key words: Sender, *Crónica del alba*, Delibes, *El camino*, Matute, *Primera memoria*, coming-of-age novel, maturation process, values, children, youth, post-war

Résumé: Ces auteurs décrivent la réalité d'après la guerre civile espagnole à travers des yeux d'enfants ou de jeunes adolescents : Pepe Garcés dans *Crónica del alba* (1942) par Ramón Sender, Daniel ou «El Mochuelo» dans *El camino* (1950) par Miguel Delibes, ainsi que Matia et Borja dans *Primera memoria* (1960) par Ana María Matute. Tous ces romanciers évoquent des valeurs et des vertus spécifiques et leurs opposés polaires : (1) l'amour et la compassion contre la haine et la vengeance, et (2) le courage et la vaillance contre la trahison et la poltronnerie. Dans leurs récits, ces auteurs écrivent au sujet de cette période si sensible pendant laquelle se forme l'identité personnelle de l'individu. Les protagonistes cherchent et trouvent le courage de résister à l'oppression et de protester contre l'injustice. Chaque travail étudié ici met l'accent sur des jeunes qui, pour des raisons personnelles différentes, abandonnent progressivement l'égoïsme enfantin pour en arriver en fin de compte au soin pour «l'autre.» Ils

trouvent le courage pour se rebeller contre les «normes» établies par le monde d'adulte. Ainsi, même à leur jeune âge, ils exhibent «le courage de tenir bon contre le mal».

Mots-clés: Sender, *Crónica del alba*, Delibes, *El camino*, Matute, *Primera memoria*, roman de maturité, valeurs, enfants, jeunes adolescents, après la guerre civile espagnole.

When worldviews and armies collide, we expect violence, social chaos, and personal trauma. Spanish narratives of the post-war period mirror these tragic by-products in varying degrees, but many novelists also contribute meaningful stories of protest, of resistance, and of hope, producing voices and visions contrary to those promoted by the fascist victors. Due to government censorship, however, Spanish authors had to communicate their messages subtly, cloaked in discrete fictions. The writers featured in the present study describe post-war reality through the eyes of children and young adolescents in transition to adulthood: Pepe Garcés in Sender's *Crónica del alba* (1942), Daniel «El Mochuelo» in Delibes' *El camino* (1950), and Matia and Borja in Matute's *Primera memoria* (1960). In the present essay I focus on an ethos articulated by these authors who, I contend, present narratives either openly anti-fascist or at least unsympathetic to the Franco regime. I show how each novelist portrays specific values and virtues as well as their polar opposites: (1) love and compassion vs. hate and revenge, and (2) courage and fortitude vs. betrayal and cowardice.

In their narratives, Sender, Delibes and Matute write about that vulnerable time in each individual's life during which personal identity is formed –or distorted, or lost–, spotlighting the adolescent years when the answers to questions such as «Who am I?» become desperately important. Because of the war and its aftermath, the children know about hate; they seek love. Various difficult personal conflicts cause them to try to find the courage to resist pressures for social conformity; they stand *against* injustice and *for* someone; they stand for what they believe is right. They seek and find the courage to resist, the courage to speak out, and the courage to write. The novels center on family life in which ethical foundations are laid and multiplied throughout a given culture. All constitute social protest but differ from «social novels» like *La colmena* and *El Jarama* characterized by an objective, «camera-like» narrator and multiple protagonists (Spires, 1978:76). Each work studied here dramatizes essential questions of identity in a subjective way, and all focus on just a few young people who move from childish self-centeredness to care for «the other.» The protagonists find the bravery to rebel against the «norms» established by the adult world. At an early age, they exhibit «the courage to stand.»

The protagonists' ages range from ten to fifteen. In their stories, we see at least three modes for describing this stage of life: (1) echoes of the Bildungsroman, (2) a suggestion of primitive rite of passage, and (3) retrospective narrations about coming of age, about children as innocent victims, unable to cope with the «sins of the fathers.» Each

analysis focuses on events surrounding the climax of the story, when pressures and tensions are the greatest and significant change most evident. In *Crónica del alba*, for example, Sender traces in his young protagonist a move from egotism and senseless gang violence to true courage and caring for the helpless and weak, a sort of «character change climax» in which Pepe aids a blind beggar. In *El camino*, a shy young boy of eleven struggles to cope with the death of his friend and with his own imminent departure to a boarding school. In the climax, Daniel, who has never spoken out against anything, speaks passionately on behalf of la Uca-uca and against la Guindilla mayor, the former's new stepmother and the town's self-appointed enforcer of her own narrowly-defined version of morality. In *Primera memoria*, young Matia finds the courage to befriend Manuel Taronjí, whose family is being persecuted by fascists, including her own grandmother. Matia speaks out against injustice and affirms herself as his friend. Unfortunately, in the end, when Borja accuses Manuel of a crime, she weakens, and her testimony is all but ignored.

None of the three novels present adults as courageously «taking a stand» for any noble ideal. In *Crónica del alba* and *El camino*, the fathers are interested more in business and worldly gain; the mothers are passive. Only la Guindilla mayor in *El camino* seems zealously committed to her «cause:» moral purity through censorship and careful scrutiny of the young. In *Primera memoria*, a good man is assassinated, probably on orders from Matia's grandmother, Doña Práxedes. Thus, the adults are damaged, misdirected, distracted by materialistic goals, not in touch with the children, and in one case openly supporting the *Falange*.

Sender's *Crónica del alba* evinces many of the traditional characteristics of a *bildungsroman*, which typically focuses on the passage from childhood to young adulthood; early examples of «narratives of ethical formation» literally illustrate «becoming» or «coming of age,» often in steps and stages. On the other hand, no rigid formula for this type of novel has endured. Although the narrative of passage to adulthood is arguably universal in nature, particular values inevitably come into play, e.g., those implied by a Protestant or Catholic perspective, liberal or conservative, German or English or American, etc. (Hardin, 1991:xi-xii). Sender's novel, like other variants, adds a few distinctive twists. Since Sender supported the Republican government, he had no interest in reinforcing Franco's version of Spanish character, personal identity, and social integration. Instead, Sender presents an antagonistically contrary coming of age narrative. His protagonist, Pepe, slowly comes to understand what it means to be a courageous man, an understanding at sharp variance with Fascist models. Sender returns to historical Spanish values articulated well before the modern age. In addition, although his protagonist is mentored mostly by a priest, he is also influenced in part by ghostly apparitions and an unidentified chronicler, all from Spain's distant past.

Notwithstanding the novel's lack of chapter organization and its numerous narrative side-tracks, we perceive Pepe's metamorphosis in stages, from his initial self-centered, immature impulses to a life-changing understanding of certain virtues, especially «the courage to stand.» Early on, he demonstrates a colossal ego, which leads him to participate in a risky «mock war.» Later, he discovers a new meaning of courage in an adventure in the passageways underneath a castle where he encounters ghosts from his country's history. This meeting leads to a positive outcome in which Pepe fearlessly defends a blind beggar. In the initial narration, Pepe's choices, according to the narrator, are violent, reckless and dehumanizing, and thus, by implication, undesirable (Sender, 1973:80). They perhaps constitute even a criticism of what he perceives as the «fascist mentality.» The final sections of the novel represent the desirable outcome of identity and character building with a focus on true valor and on helping the «other.»

Real change in Pepe begins during the journey to the castle and adventure in the catacombs underneath (Ibid., 1973:93). His family spends the summer at the citadel of Sancho Garcés, and others join them over a period of several days (Ibid.). One day, while poking on the ground with a staff, Pepe finds a flagstone that seems hollow. His father and others remove it and discover an underground gallery, subterranean passages, which contain tombs. Pepe's father makes a map of the gallery, and the group does some preliminary explorations (Ibid., 1973:103). They find a jar with coins and parchments (Ibid., 1973:105), one of which the priest, Mosén Joaquín, deciphers.

One of the parchments lists three classes of men:

«Santos»: «*Los unos que por su buen ánimo para tratar con el prójimo, su corazón amoroso de Dios y de los hombres*» (Ibid., 1973:110). This definition does not necessarily refer to canonized Catholic saints (noted for orthodoxy, miracles, martyrdom and extraordinary religious piety), but to those who simply for love of God and man actually help others.

«Poetas»: «[...] *llegaron a penetrar más que los comunes ojos en la entraña de las cosas*» (Ibid.).

«Héroes»: «[...] *aquellos que buscan esforzados hechos y el hierro enemigo para escribir con su sangre...*» (Ibid.). Each definition helps Pepe in his understanding of true manhood.

The adults plan to explore the gallery further on the following day, but Pepe hopes to prove his courage by exploring the gallery from the opposite end and meet up with his father's expedition (Ibid., 1973:115). Upon entering the gallery alone, Pepe begins dealing with fear. As he walks along, he calls out but only echoes answer. «¿Miedo? Vivía ya en el miedo, respiraba el miedo, de él me sustentaba» (Ibid., 1973:119).

In this crucial experience, Pepe first sees a warrior's helmet and a shadow begins to move. This ghost was in life only a poor mortal, an artist –poet– who made statues of saints. He vanishes and two other shadows appear. The first is a venerated saint and the second, a hero whose helmet's visor is down. When the latter removes his helmet, Pepe sees that he was beheaded. Pepe thinks, «Al santo lo mataron, al poeta lo mataron, al

héroe lo mataron. Yo soy bastardo, héroe y poeta. ¿Me matarán a mí? Aunque me maten, no tengo miedo» (Ibid., 1973:121). Though he recognizes the three categories, he does not apply sainthood to himself. He has resolved that he may be killed, but that he will not be afraid.

This experience differs from previous attempts at «heroism» in that he eventually faces fear alone in the dark; he is not in control or in command of a group. It is a step up in importance, challenge, and symbolism. Pepe is driven by the need to prove his courage. His opponents turn out to be ghosts that do not harm him. He learns from them about the virtues and about the potentially tragic consequences of standing for those virtues. They make real what he has heard about in the parchments. After dinner, the priest reads his translation of the written manuscript, reviving an anonymous voice from the past who, like Sender, sought to chronicle Spanish virtues he thought important (Ibid., 1973:109).

Following Pepe's return home, we see the positive product of these encounters. Pepe comes across the beggar; Carrasco has cut the leash of his guide dog and later claims to have killed the animal (Ibid., 1973:129). Even though Carrasco shows up and taunts him, Pepe guides the man to shelter across town. As they move along, «las gentes que nos veían pasar se hacían cruces, sin acabar de creerlo. Yo iba firme, grave...» (Ibid.). On his return, he again meets and defies Carrasco, which results in a fight. Pepe beats him, but both emerge bleeding. According to the definition given by the parchment writer, Pepe has done something heroic and «saintly» by helping his fellow man, even shedding some of his own blood. Anthony Trippett notes «En contraste con la indiferencia y comprensión de los mayores, un chico joven muestra compasión por un habitante de una cueva» (Trippett, 2001:43). Pepe has changed.

Significantly, this time Pepe led no gang in senseless violence to prove his courage. He «takes a stand» in several ways, such as by aiding the beggar and by defying Carrasco. Moreover, Pepe does not boast about his good deed, nor does he immediately respond to Carrasco's ongoing insults. In this deed, he simultaneously cuts across social boundaries, creating disbelief among passers-by who recognize the class chasm he is crossing; adults had not helped the beggar and are shocked that he did.

Pepe has discovered a new definition of courage, at least new to him. He has not taken risks, going into «battle» as he had earlier in the narrative, but he has defended the weak by speaking out with courage for the blind beggar, ignoring what others might think. His motivations seem purer, less egotistical. Before the battle, he felt dehumanized and fought for ego and irrational hatred. The doctor observes: «Hace muchos años que Gracián definió el héroe con más de santo y de poeta que de héroe mismo.» (Sender, 1973:115). In his essay, «El héroe,» Gracián attempted to broaden the definition of courage and heroism. The heroic warrior fights not only with «la punta de su espada,»

but also with «la grandeza del corazón» (Gracián, 1960:12). In his conclusion, he states: «Todo héroe participó tanto de felicidad y de grandeza cuanto de virtud, porque corren paralelas desde el nacer al morir» (Ibid., 1960:33).

The core essence of the *Bildungsroman*, for Mikhail Bakhtin, tells of the protagonist «becoming,» not of the «ready-made hero» (Bakhtin, 1986:20). Pepe moves from anti-social individuality to integration of his unique contribution to the good of the community. At a very young age, he dreams of being independent, free, a warrior, to make sacrifices for love, to create his own world literally and poetically. His initial aims are not bad, just misguided, egocentric, dangerous, and foolish. Bakhtin notes that «the construction of being/identity and morality depend on moments: «These basic moments are I-for-myself, the other-for-me, and I-for-the-other». All the values of actual life and culture are arranged around the basic architectonic points of the actual world of the performed act» (Bakhtin, 1988:54). In an interview, Sender himself characterized Pepe's war against «lo otro» as negative (Peñuelas, 1970:149). Only in reaching out to the other, as he in fact does at the end, does he discover courage, values, virtues, and, in Bakhtin's words cited above, ultimately «the construction of being/identity.»

In Delibes' novel, *El camino*, a timid Daniel, «El Mochuelo,» lies awake all night, remembering several traumas in his short life; he is also full of anxiety about an imminent change forced upon him. Like Pepe, he will depart the valley for boarding school, which according to his father represents «progress». Daniel questions the value of this educational plan and also ponders definitions of true progress in life. Ultimately, he considers the meaning of passing to manhood as he reviews local male role models and select notions of masculinity. Obviously, Daniel and his friends want to be considered «real men.» But a survey of those who might serve as examples reveals that the «models» are in many ways as conflicted and confused as is Daniel.

Implicit in this reflection is the question «What is a real man?» all of which leads to the same identity question faced by Pepe, «Who am I?» Influenced by false notions of masculinity and identity propagated within his dysfunctional community, Daniel like Pepe also passes through various phases, temporarily changing in negative, distorted ways. At the novel's end, however, this timid eleven-year-old asserts himself and speaks out against those imposed definitions of identity and on behalf of a fellow victim. Even though Daniel seems completely distraught and confused, he takes significant steps toward manhood and authentic identity.

El Camino, although not strictly speaking a *Bildungsroman*, presents certain issues of maturation, since Daniel finds himself at a crucial juncture, in passage to a new stage of life. He is in a process of major change and formation with neither an obvious mentor and nor a clearly articulated ethic. In the novel, we observe various portraits of manhood, individualism, and community, which only occasionally exist in harmonious

balance. Delibes explores the issues involved in values education: on an ideal level, such an education should promote the integration of an ethically formed individual to become a contributing member of a harmonious society. Delibes, however, plainly demonstrates that certain values are more subjectively perceived and that at times distortions are imposed by a dysfunctional community, creating conflict in the village and putting Daniel at risk of never finding his authentic self.

Daniel does, I argue, progress as a man in a positive way, although with a clear sense of loss. He passes through a social/community maze in stages and emerges affirming his own identity, abilities and individuality, a positive note of hope of his caring and courage, much like Pepe Garcés. Also, like Pepe, he undergoes positive change, but not without intermediate false steps/stages, which involve «scars» and La Uca-uca's freckles: (1) He, along with his friends, begins with superficial attempts to prove manhood, as represented by «scars». (2) Then, his delusions about marrying La Mica motivate him to study and «progresar» but also inflate his ego and lead him to ridicule la Uca-uca and her freckles (Delibes, 2003:137). Later, (3) he climbs the *cucaña*—carnival pole—surprising himself and the town, but it is only a superficially «manly feat,» like those Paco el herrero had done. These changes within him resemble steps and stages typical of «coming of age» as society sees it. The ultimate risk for Daniel is that he might be absorbed into the prison of the town's expectations, and not escape a place where all residents are locked into an assigned role or profession. In some cases, he imitates weak male models that he sees, and in others, he seems to make subconscious responses to social influences that promote egotism, hatred, and alienation.

Daniel's perception of the town is highly idealistic: «Y Daniel, el Mochuelo, sabía que por aquellas calles [...] pasaron hombres honorables, que hoy eran sombras, pero que dieron al pueblo un sentido, una armonía, un ritmo, un modo propio y peculiar de vivir» (Ibid., 2003:33). We note with interest his perception of an honorable heritage and history, in some ways comparable to Pepe and his encounters with the past. On the other hand, those men's greatness and honor has not been preserved in the post-war present; at least none are plainly visible in the novel. These are not ghosts but represent what Daniel perceives as a type of heritage. The mayor's perception, in contrast, is that all town residents are individualists and do not care to help others; they are not creating a flourishing community. «La gente del valle era obstinadamente individualista. Don Ramón, el alcalde, no mentía cuando afirmaba que cada individuo del pueblo prefería morirse antes que mover un dedo en beneficio de los demás» (Ibid., 2003:161).

Yet we see the most dysfunctional aspect of the town is embodied not in a man, but in la Guindilla mayor, who seeks to impose a uniform morality that suppresses individuality. Janet Díaz observes that characters in the novel are a «caricature» (Díaz, 1971:55). La Guindilla mayor is indeed a shallow and laughable caricature, but nonetheless

a serious force, a dangerous character in the novel for many reasons. She is troubled about her own sins to a ludicrous degree and about impossible theological questions that no one, not even the priest, can answer. She is a parody of the panoptic society, morally vigilant, wandering with a lantern to expose couples making love in the countryside. Though religious, she is cruel and heartless, slapping children and pronouncing God's judgment after the deaths of various individuals. She seeks to force community and conformity while denying and repressing individuality, especially in the case of la Uca-uca over whom she has real power. The novel does not say la Guindilla mayor is a fascist, but she does embody in parody and caricature a fascist worldview and methods that echoes those of the fascist regime for suppressing individuality and enforcing conformity. Ironically, la Guindilla mayor tries to mold a people who are already locked into rigid occupational roles for social and economic reasons.

Quino el Manco heroically saves la Guindilla mayor from the wrath of angry lovers exposed by her lantern light. As a result of this act of gallantry, the two plan to marry. When the wedding is announced, la Uca-uca shares with Daniel that her future step-mother wants to take her to the city and remove her freckles (Delibes, 2003:192), the very thing Daniel had previously ridiculed about her. A child unable to cope with the change in her world, she runs away into the woods the day of the wedding. When someone says she may have been eaten by a wolf, Daniel is filled with anxiety and undergoes a significant change of heart: «[...] él no quería que a la Uca-uca le quitaran las pecas y tampoco que la devorase un lobo» (Delibes, 2003:193). He shows concern for «the other.»

The men form a search party and at least temporarily become a caring community. The group returns at two in the morning with la Uca-uca. Her father embraces her, but her new step-mother slaps her twice, once on each cheek. Quino protests, but to no avail. Quino had protected la Guindilla mayor, «[...] la defendió como un hombre» (Ibid., 2003:169) when he stood between her and certain death. Then, he did not relent. But now he cannot stand up to her to protect his own daughter from his new wife's cruel abuse. Defeated, «se apoyaba en la mesa, como si llorara, o como si acabara de sobrevenirle una gran desgracia» (Ibid., 2003:193). He is a man «cut off,» and the future does not look bright for his daughter. In point of fact, no one in the town stands up to la Guindilla mayor except Paco, the muscular «macho,» but only when he is drunk. This tragic incident has a positive effect on Daniel who undergoes a transformation from arrogant mocker to compassionate human being. Here, he cares about la Uca-uca and her individuality, with no thought of reward or his own ego.

Germán's death is another key incident that forces significant change in Daniel. Roque, the only remaining member of the gang, will not allow Daniel to cry, and so becomes yet another repressive force in his life. Paco, previously the ultimate male role

model, cannot handle the death and turns to alcohol (Ibid., 2003:197). Thus, we see the progressive dissolution of the various simulacra of manhood. The town experiences a temporary solidarity, over Germán's death (Ibid., 2003:192). Women cry; the community gathers. Germán's death brings to the surface many issues for Daniel and temporarily creates an artificial sense of community, one that supports and affirms. Because of Germán's death and Roque's pressure on Daniel not to cry, the gang community dissolves at this point, and Daniel is left isolated, seemingly «condemned» to his father's will.

The community affirms Daniel before his departure, but he is suspicious. They say: «A ver si vuelves hecho un hombre» (Ibid., 2003: 216). But Daniel still has pending questions: Is he really on the road to manhood? Has he exhibited real courage, though meek and shy? He boldly climbed the wavering *cucaña* all the way to the top and was proclaimed a sort of town hero for the day. But did this prove him a man? Héctor Romero sees this incident as a victory for the weak Daniel who proves himself «más voluntarioso, triunfa» (Romero, 1978:13). Does he really have the makings of a true Daniel, the brave biblical prophet for whom he was named? Has his authentic individuality been formed, at least in part? Is the road chosen for him of God or simply of his father? Like Pepe Garcés, is he on a path connecting him with the «hombres honorables» of the past, who are no longer visible because of the devastation of war?

The climax of the novel offers an inherent ambiguity. Certain elements suggest a pessimistic view, the death of an innocent boy and a town that will never really change. All residents are imprisoned in professions and roles, in invisible social rules and expectations. Adults have not changed and probably will not. Ironically, his father's benign plan is to free Daniel from this «prison;» he will not be a cheese maker like his father. But what will really happen to him? Does he have hope?

In the morning light, Daniel looks out his window and sees *la Uca-uca* below. She will not be able to see him off at the train station. He shouts to her: «Uca-uca [...] —dijo, al fin—. No dejes a *la Guindilla* que te quite las pecas, ¿me oyes? ¡No quiero que te las quite!» (Delibes, 2003:220). Daniel pulls from the window because he is moved by this symbolic assault on her personhood, her individuality, and her uniqueness. *La Guindilla mayor* is trying to repress all three. He cares, is moved, and he releases pent up tears. Others in the community may or may not have heard his bold declaration, but that does not matter to Daniel now.

At this point we see the dramatic reversal in Daniel, the result of a transformation. The very thing he mocked in *la Uca-uca*, he now affirms in her. As a «real man,» he speaks out. As a «real man,» he cries, grieving for many obvious reasons, but his tears take nothing away from what he has so heroically spoken. Tears represent the culmination of grief, loss, life cut off, confusion, and empathy for *La Uca-uca*. This action would be normal for a young boy unable to cope with the pain of loss in death and an uncertain

future out of his control. He has spoken out on behalf of another, one in danger of having her uniqueness altered and distorted. These are the beginnings of change that signal positive, if faltering, steps toward manhood. The key is the path that Daniel has chosen for himself, the decision to stand on behalf of la Uca-uca, something her own father was unable to do.

We know Pepe's end, the outcome of his character development and his tragic death and despair. But our knowledge of Daniel's destiny is cut off, and even though he feels cut off, even from the path the Lord has marked out for him, we see the seeds of the man he may become. We observe the beginnings of a man of conviction with the courage to speak out and stand against the local tyrant, like the biblical Daniel for whom he was named. Ernest Johnson points out that «given a chance, Daniel may subdue the lions of repressive civilized reality» (Johnson, 1963:751).

Ana María Matute's *Primera memoria* suggests the structure of primitive rites of initiation for its protagonist, reflecting the primitivism of fascism and the war, as I have demonstrated in detail elsewhere (Thomas, 1978). Yet in many ways, the situation parallels all we have seen in the previous novels: the passage to adulthood of a young girl, who, with no mother or clear-cut adult model, is confused and ambivalent as she faces irrational external forces which draw her into a hostile adult world. But in this book, the final result is that young Matia is involuntarily initiated into the world she most abhors.

Matia's grandmother, Doña Práxedes, has probably arranged for the murder of José Taronjé, father of her friend Manuel, and has relentlessly persecuted his family and others on the island. During an outing, Borja and Matia discover Taronjé's corpse, Matia's first personal contact with death, an essential part of all rites of initiation. She later befriends the dead man's son, Manuel. As Matia and Manuel sit on the slope, Matia boldly speaks out against her grandmother's –and most of the island's– wretched treatment of Manuel and his family –e.g., poisoning their well–: «Me parece una cosa horrible lo que os han hecho» (Matute, 1960:116). She realizes that she is alone in taking this stance, and as in Daniel's case, there is no one around to challenge her, but it is nonetheless a difficult step.

After she speaks out, she becomes somewhat embarrassed and flushed; the narrator remembers: «Tenía la piel tan encendida como si todo el sol se me hubiera metido dentro. Y aun me dije, confusamente: 'Pues no he bebido vino. Ni siquiera había una gota de coñac en la copa de la tía Emilia'» (Ibid., 1960:117). The contrast between the bright sunlight of maturity and compassionate action and the shadows of Emilia's withdrawal from life in liquor (echoing Paco el herrero) is made apparent here. The sun is figuratively «inside» Matia at this moment. Before, it burned her skin, but now it has penetrated her completely. She feels its warmth, its strength and energy. At her strongest moment, she recalls that she is not under the influence of intoxicants. Her bold act of

maturity is real, not the result of drunken illusion.

Later in the novel, Borja stands alone but in quite a different way. He faces off with a rival gang and emerges triumphant. This time, he has won without a weapon. He first confronts Guiem and the gang: «Borja estaba solo, de pie [...] quieto y dorado en medio de la plaza, brotándole de los ojos un reflejo del tío Álvaro →Fusila a quien quiere...» (Ibid., 1960:143)–. He attacks the gang and recovers the straw effigy they had made of him. «¡Le di una buena! ¡Para que aprendan! Siempre me echaban en la cara lo de la carabina, pues hoy he ido con las manos en los bolsillos [...]» (Ibid., 1960:144). Thus, through gang warfare and «macho» courage, Borja completes a strange «rite of initiation.» In his mind, he has proven his courage and physical superiority over other boys. He has become more like his father, the fascist colonel. This event reflects precisely the «battlefield courage» that Daniel struggled to show and what Pepe Garcés did before his transforming experiences.

Although Matia has spoken out against her grandmother's evil behavior and has resisted bravely, she nonetheless is about to take the first steps in her actual passage to the adult state fashioned by her grandmother's character ideals. She will unwittingly help betray Manuel. Matia takes Manuel to the *Joven Simón* where Borja stores his stolen goods; Manuel clearly trusts her based on what she has said. At the *Joven Simón* with Manuel, Matia begins her reversal: she sways definitively away from the previously set course toward a positive maturity –compassion, honesty, and courage shown with Manuel– and falls into Borja's elaborate trap, taking Manuel with her. She recognizes that Borja is deceiving Manuel by asking him to take stolen items to Es Mariné's tavern, but says nothing; she makes no effort to stop Borja or to warn Manuel. As the painful truth dawns on the narrator, certain distancing words begin to creep into her description of her past self in order to separate her present guilt from her past action: «Mi cobardía era sólo comparable a mi egoísmo» (Matute, 1960:193). The narrator realizes that, at this point, she became a helpless, «egotistical» and «cowardly» captive of her grandmother's world. Borja was already a prisoner of the *abuela*: «Borja hizo un gesto extraño con las manos que me recordó a la abuela» (Ibid., 1960:195). Matia sees Borja as imitating his selected adult model, their grandmother. Only the final betrayal remains—the crucial and binding test of passage for both—Borja's hypocritical confession.

As the final chapter opens, Emilia gives Matia a bottle of perfume as a Christmas present and anticlimactically declares «ya eres una mujer» (Ibid., 1960:200). A weak introduction to a finalizing ritual has been performed on Matia by an equally weak adult. Borja goes to confession at Santa María and lies to the priest, probably telling him exactly what he knew the priest would want to hear. Borja later relates his lie in the confessional to Doña Práxedes. He basically tells the truth that he had stolen items from her, but while dramatically sobbing, he claims that Manuel forced him to do so

and that Manuel was much stronger than he. Borja who triumphed over gang members and boasted vociferously about it now tells his grandmother that Manuel was «stronger than he.» His «machista» achievement apparently had no effect on his character. He was willing to lie and hate Manuel for no particular reason. Matia does not speak out forcefully; even though she knows the truth, she cannot move: «Una gran cobardía me clavaba al suelo» (Ibid., 1960:209). Matia egotistically fears that if she does speak out, Borja will reveal all of her dark secrets to her grandmother, and that she will be sent to a reformatory where, ironically, there is no sunlight and only loneliness.

The final paragraph relates her final encounter with Borja. They hug each other, and he cries again because he is full of anger and hate and perhaps feels a measure of guilt for what he has done. At sunrise, she sees the cock of Son Major with his «coléricos ojos» and his «horrible y estridente canto, que clamaba, quizá—qué sé yo—por alguna misteriosa causa perdida» (Ibid., 1960:212). Margaret Jones observes: «The tension of the Civil War is repeated on a minor scale in the war between two groups of boys [...] The greatest impact of the work come from [a] Biblical episode: the betrayal of Christ, unwittingly reenacted by ‘innocent’ children» (Jones, 1970:22).

The «misteriosa causa perdida» refers to several previously suggested ideas: the cause of maturity, of adult purity, justice, courage, and compassion, all lost; the loss of hope, traditionally associated with sunrise, is also suggested. The crowing of the cock at sunrise reminds us of Peter’s denial of Christ, as Jones has mentioned. The narrator’s final realization is, at the end of the novel, much like Peter’s: she has, through cowardice, betrayed the only person capable of saving her from a life of spiritual darkness and remorse. Matia was –and perhaps is– the image of her grandmother, the person she most despised or perhaps she is like Tía Emilia, the weakest; and only a separation of many years and a painstaking search into the past have given her that realization.

A comparison of the three novels, *Crónica del alba*, *El camino*, and *Primera memoria*, reveals persistent motifs: the younger members of Spanish society suffer pressures to conform; all search for an individual, authentic identity, with little help from negative adult role models and dysfunctional family and social units. They all have encounters with death on one level or another. Some of the resultant messages are hopeful, others pessimistic, and often convey a certain pervasive ambiguity.

We see conflict in the formative years, personal turmoil that forces moral choices. All authors focus on emerging identity –and confusion about it–. Protagonists are tempted to egotism and hate, but are drawn to love, compassion, and forgiveness. In crucial moments, all take a courageous stand that helps shape their identity. In their quest for acceptance, Pepe, Daniel, Matia, and Borja become involved with gangs—directly or indirectly— all of which engage in senseless violence— reflecting the scar of civil war. The four seek gender role models with a negative result. In each narrative,

we see children struggling to cope and in many cases, not coping with their environment. They are too young to be asked to make adult choices, to show courage which the adults do not. Initially, they absorb their environment of oppression, hatred and prejudice. All are tempted by egotism but realize that this only causes isolation and greater emptiness. As they seek the aforementioned values, they encounter simulacra, counterfeits, from «machismo» to imposed morality and strict, stifling definitions of identity. Their transitions and transformations result in a new sense of courage and caring based on time-honored virtues. The passage to maturity and virtue occurs only briefly for Matia and apparently never happens for Borja, making an even more tragic final statement.

In the climax of each novel, most of the protagonists learn true heroism, to «stand» in defense of friends, for the weak, for what they believe is right, against what they believe is wrong. In each, we observe echoes of the *Bildungsroman*, including rites of passage and retrospective narrations about crucial moments of change and «passage.» Ironically, even though three of the four characters resist absorption by cultural and adult expectations, at the end all four youths are sent to boarding schools for further «molding.» This analysis reveals profound albeit subtle social criticism. The authors do not choose to portray many segments of a complex and corrupt culture, but instead focus on a personal level of daily family life. Their diagnosis of their society's problem and its solution can be summarized in the epigraph of Jesús Fernández Santos' novel, *Los bravos* (1954): «El destino de un pueblo es como el destino de un hombre. Su carácter es su destino (J. Wasserman)» (15).

BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

- BAKHTIN, Mikhail (1986): *Speech Genres & Other Late Essays*, McGEE, V. W. (trad.), EMERSON, C. and HOLQUIST, M., Austin, University of Texas Press.
- BAKHTIN, Mikhail (1993): *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, LIAPUNOV, V. (trad.), LIAPUNOV, V. and HOLQUIST, M. (red.), Austin, University of Texas Press.
- DELIBES, Miguel (2003): *El camino*, Barcelona, Destino.
- DÍAZ, Janet (1971): *Miguel Delibes*, New York, Twayne.
- DÍAZ, Janet W (1971): *Ana María Matute*, New York, Twayne.
- DÍEZ, Luis Mateo (2003): «Infancias: Una lectura de *El camino*, de Miguel Delibes», in *Miguel Delibes: Homenaje académico y literario*, 108-112, Valladolid, Spain, Universidad de Valladolid, Junta de Castilla y León.
- FERNÁNDEZ SANTOS, Jesús (1972): *Los bravos*, Navarra, Salvat.
- GRACIÁN, Baltasar (1960): «El Héroe», in *Obras completas*, redactado por Arturo del Hoyo. Madrid: Aguilar.

- HARDIN, J. (red.) (1991): *Reflection and Action: Essays on the Bildungsroman*. Columbia, University of South Carolina Press.
- JOHNSON, E. A., Jr. (1963): «Miguel Delibes, 'El camino'—A Way of Life», in *Hispania: A Journal Devoted to the Teaching of Spanish and Portuguese* 46.4, pp. 748-752.
- JONES, Margaret E. W. (1970): *The Literary World of Ana María Matute*, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press.
- KING, Ch. L. (1974): *Ramón Sender*, New York, Twayne.
- LAFORET, C. (1971): *Nada*, Barcelona, Destino.
- MATUTE, A. M. (1960): *Primera memoria*, Barcelona, Destino.
- PEÑUELAS, M. C. (1970): *Conversaciones con Ramón Sender*, Madrid, EMESA.
- ROMERO, H. R. (1978): «El camino de Delibes bajo una nueva luz», in *Romance Notes* 19, pp. 10-15.
- SENDER, R. J. (1973): *Crónica del alba 1*. Barcelona, Destino.
- SOTELO, M. (1995): *El camino*, Barcelona, Destino.
- SPIRES, R. C. (1978): *La novela española de posguerra: Creación artística y experiencia personal*, Madrid, Cupsa Editorial.
- THOMAS, M. D. (1978): «The Rite of Initiation in Matute's *Primera memoria*», in *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* 25, pp. 153-164.
- TRIPPETT, A. (2001): «La autobiografía desde el exilio: Algunas observaciones sobre la primera parte de *Crónica del alba* de Ramón J. Sender», in CARRASQUER, F., *Sender en su siglo: antología de textos críticos sobre Ramón J. Sender*, Huesca, Instituto de Estudios Altoaragoneses, Diputación de Huesca.