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Trace-Reading the Story of
Matia/Matute in *Los mercaderes*

RALPH COHEN ONCE REMARKED THAT THE CRITICAL discourse of Wolfgang Iser—blanks, places of indeterminacy, and vacancies—had turned us all into gap-readers.¹ I would like to propose a different reader born of a different discourse, the critico-deconstructive discourse of Jacques Derrida. This reader, whose identity resides in the play of presence and absence, imprint and supplement, has always already been inscribed by the text that we have come to know as Derrida: it is the trace-reader of grammatology.²

The trace-reader comprehends the rather extensive readership typology of recent critical endeavor—implied, ideal, virtual, super, mock, informed, and at-home—³ and reissues their functional multiplicity as part of its own economy. In short, at the heart of these readers can be found the trace-reader: it names their activity *par excellence* and fulfills the promise of their various titles. It is also the very same reader prescribed by the text of Matute's trilogy, *Los mercaderes*.⁴ How or what, then, is this trace-reader? The answer to this question will lay the groundwork for the double reading announced in my title: to stop "the infinite play of the text at a particular point (...) halting dissemination" of *Los merca-*

deres in order to pursue two threads of the “inexhaustible” narrative⁵—that of the author, Matute, and that of the protagonist, Matia. This trace-reading will anatomize schematically a duality inhabiting the signifier “autobiography,” for it is host both to the life of Matute (“bio”) and to the telling or virtual self-writing (“graphy”) that is the story of Matia—fictional text interwoven by the referent of the author. But first, a working definition of the activity of trace-reading.

The neologism “trace-reader” is derived from the Derridian usage of the notions of “trace” and “supplement,” two systematic metaphors for the more popular grammatological terms “writing” and “difference.” Although I shall review these terms as they are defined and used by Derrida, placing them briefly in the overall context of his deconstructive project, it will become apparent that a trace-reader “imposes structures to delimit and arrest play,” which may best be viewed as a weariness (inevitably) built into the very act of trace-reading.⁶

Concerned with the deconstruction of Western metaphysics, biased since Plato toward phono or logocentrism—privileging a center, presence, voice—Derrida seeks to redeem condemned writing by demonstrating how its play of difference, traces, and supplements is in fact the origin of language. The Saussurian notion of the sign (signifier/signified) is unpacked in such a way that it undoes what it proposes, i.e. it champions grammatology rather than semiotics.⁷ Meaning arrived at through differentiation, the originary play of writing itself—traces of traces, and upon and within traces, etc.—explodes the validity of naive referentiality. The arbitrariness of the arbitrary sign is celebrated, and it is the play of language born thereof that yields meaning or signification. Writing, difference, trace, supplement, inscription, imprint, effacement, all of these notions now signify “any practice of differentiation” that which characterizes us as “homo significans.”⁸

In *Speech and Phenomena* Derrida writes that

The living present springs forth out of its nonidentity with itself and from the possibility of a retentional trace. It is always already a trace. This trace cannot be thought out on the basis of a simple present whose life would be within itself; the self of the living pres-

ent is primordially a trace. The trace is not an attribute; we cannot say that the self of the living present 'primordially is' it. Being-primordial must be thought on the basis of the trace, and not the reverse. This protowriting is at work at the origin of sense. (85)

In other words, "The trace must be thought before the entity" (G, 47). "The trace *is nothing*, it is not an entity, it exceeds the question *What is?* and contingently makes it possible" (G, 75). Derrida is concerned with fullness and the fallacy of simplicity: "*The (pure) trace is differance*. It does not depend on any sensible plentitude, audible or visible, phonic or graphic. It is, on the contrary, the condition of such plentitude" (G, 62). The trace is "that which does not let itself be summed up in the simplicity of a present" (G, 66). "The trace is not a presence but is rather the simulacrum of a presence that dislocates, displaces, and refers beyond itself" (SP, 156). And, linked to this play a shifting "presence," Derrida writes that

Differance is what makes the movement of signification possible only if each element that is said to be 'present,' appearing on the stage of presence, is related to something other than itself, but retains the mark of a past element and already lets itself be hollowed out by the mark of its relation to a future element. (SP, 142).

Thus the trace is responsible for what we call the past, present, and future; it participates in the formation of these temporal categories, but is itself other. Furthermore, with respect to a sense of origin, this play of presence and absence, imprint and effacement, leads Derrida to state that

The trace is not only the disappearance of origin — within the discourse that we sustain and according to the path that we follow it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin. (G, 61)

From living present, entity, plentitude, presence, and origin, it is practically no step at all for Derrida to deconstruct the referentiality of language: "The use of language or the employment of any code which implies a play of forms — with no

determined or invariable substratum — also presupposes a retention and protention of differences, a spacing and temporalizing, a play of traces” (*SP*, 146). Thus reality, that of man and his language, is reinterpreted (recalled) as an eternal and infinite grid composed of nothing but traces and traces of traces, for as Vincent Leitch has so aptly put it, “The trace is the sum of all possible relations, whether isolated or not, which inhabit and constitute the sign.”⁹ Indeed, then, we are literally everything that we have been. If not for the fact that “interpretation imposes structures to limit and arrest play,” the abyss of everything as everything else would threaten seriously the very activity of reading. But the threat is simultaneously a security against itself, for as Ducrot and Todorov point out

Unmotivated, every sign would be unthinkable without a durable institution, that is, without the installation of the *trace*, an ‘imprint’ that is conserved in a ‘space of inscription,’ ‘retains’ in the here and now the preinstituted differences, and through a structure of back-reference occasions the appearance of difference ‘*as such*.’¹⁰

Furthermore, they write, “the structure of the language in its totality can only be that of a play of generation through reference, in which each ‘term’ has no presence other than the trace, to which it is reduced, of all the others from which it remains absent.”

Intimately related to the notion of the *trace* is another systematic Derridian metaphor for writing and differance — the supplement. The logic of supplementarity, “the concept of virtuality or potentiality,” further qualifies the trace that I have just described by affirming that “the meaning of the outside was always present within the inside” (*G*, 187 and 35). Like the origin of the trace, which is another trace, Derrida tells us that if “One wishes to go back *from the supplement to the source*: one must recognize that there is a *supplement at the source* (*G*, 304). Supplementarity would have it that “the outside be inside (...) the outside of the inside, should be already within the inside” (*G*, 215). In conclusion, “the indefinite process of supplementarity has always already *infiltrated* presence”

(*G*, 163), such that, when returning now to textual matters and critical concerns like the author, referent, and intertext, Derrida is correct when he states that “*There is nothing outside of the text* (there is no outside-text; il n’y a pas de hors-texte)” (*G*, 158). By virtue of the supplement there is nothing real for the reader save the text, for the text is both itself — ink on the pages of a book in a reader’s hands — and its traces or supplements, the author, the referents, intertextuality. In effect, it is because of the trace and the supplement that reading cannot, as Derrida indicates, “legitimately transgress the text toward something other than it, toward a referent (a reality that is metaphysical, historical, psychobiographical, etc.)” because all of this is always already contained in the text itself. The nature of the trace and the logic of the supplement, dovetailing into one another, decree that “our reading must be intrinsic and remain within the text” (*G*, 158-159).

Culling thus from Derrida’s concepts and terminology we arrive at the trace-reader to whom he gave breath but never named per se. The trace-reader is one who allows a text to exist in virtual plentitude. He or she is an appropriate reader, one who, like the Iserian gap-reader, is a textual structure programmed to match the repertoire of the text. But trace-reading itself names the activity of the gap-reader “who must supply the missing links” and cope with “the fundamental asymmetry between text and reader.”¹¹ For how are the gaps of a reading to be filled except by following the threads of a text, insofar as possible (for the phenomenon is inexhaustible) to wherever they may lead? And is this not pursuing the traces that produced the text? In effect, the gap-reader, who is an implied-hypothetical reader “upon whom all possible actualizations of the text may be projected,”¹² realizes the potential effect of a text best or more fully by tracking the multiplicity of traces inherent in that particular text. The trace and its accompanying activity, trace-reading, name that which resides in the Iserian gap.

A dramatization of trace-reading, then, might be: multiply yourself as a reader, follow the leads and threads of the text — its *traces* — even when they seem to take you out of the text; inform yourself in the extratext and the intertext, then

reapply your multiplicity to the text you never really left. In fact, this activity of the trace-reader is programmed always already into the text that is being read by any real, actual reader. To trace-read is to follow the instructions given by the text. It means pursuit of the intertext, which indeed subsumes the extratext (the referent); but, again, it *names* the very activity — the tracking down of textual traces, reading itself — of those engaged by intertextuality. Trace-reading, although limited by practice (recall the inevitable weariness), is shorthand for readership propriety — the adequate response, the appropriate act of reading — with respect to any given text. It can never be achieved in its entirety, but its practice works toward Walker Gibson's observation that "The realization on the part of a student that he is many people as he reads many books and responds to their language worlds is the beginning of literary sophistication in the best sense."¹³ Gibson's many books can be reduced to the discursive modes of any given text; we must learn to be many readers even when faced with a single book. With this last amendment I conclude my introduction to the trace-reader and his genealogy, and I shall now proceed to the double narrative thread of *Los mercaderes*, Matia/Matute.

The first thread that my act of trace-reading will pursue is that of the autobiographical element in the trilogy. Janet Díaz informs us that this particular trace has already attracted considerable attention, but that "the question has been neither settled nor studied in depth."¹⁴ Nor do I pretend to settle any issue here, but rather to complement the autobiographic instances cited by Díaz in her earlier work by means of further information provided me by Matute herself in interviews.

While Díaz points out that many critics have considered *Primera memoria*, the inaugural novel of *Los mercaderes*, to be the most autobiographic of Matute's novels, it is ironic that in that very same article the author herself denies such allegations, saying in an interview that it is "la novela mía menos autobiográfica que existe. No tiene nada." But Matute qualifies her denial by adding, "Es decir, no hay nada autobiográfico en el sentido estricto de la palabra." Here, of course,

Matute has opened the door to the trace, which she sanctions with the following observations on the act of writing:

lo que un escritor no se puede permitir — y menos yo, que soy una escritora intuitiva, y además apasionada — es diferir mucho de uno mismo en lo que escribe. En este aspecto, pues sí, estoy yo en mis libros. No puedo dejar de estarlo. Pero la novela autobiográfica, yo creo que no la he escrito.

But the autobiographic traces of the referent imbedding itself in her fiction will trespass even this stylistic and thematic concession of Matute.

Both the Matias of *Primera memoria* and *La trampa*, initial and final novels of the trilogy, contain traces of Matute, the actual author. It is true that Matute was not fourteen years old, like the Matia of *Primera memoria*, at the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War; she was ten. But the little black doll named Gorogó, Andersen's book of tales, the atlas, the puppet theater from Seix Barral, Barrie's *Peter Pan*, the fact that both are from upper middle class families, and the real-life models for the tyrannical *abuela* (a bizarre combination of Franco and Matute's mother), el Chino, and Jorge de Son Major (the latter two recalled from people she had known), and the reading of Garau's book about the burning of the Jews (*chuetas*) on the island of Majorca — these autobiographical elements are faithful to experiences is Matute's own life. Matute saw her first dead man, a casualty of the fighting in Barcelona, when she was eleven years old (1936); Matia has the same dramatic experience in *Primera memoria*, shortly after the outbreak of the war, when she and her cousin, Borja, find the corpse of José Taronjé in a cove. These traces of the referent that weave their way into the text of *Primera memoria* reveal that, far from "nada," this novel does indeed carry within it that which was thought perhaps to lie without. Thus, in the sense of the trace, the referent acts intertextually as the fictive supplement. Matute betrays her own autobiographic reality through Matia, even as she herself, the author, denies it; she too, through Matia, is telling us the story of how a young girl was awakened into the sordid world of adult-

hood, a loss of innocence triggered prematurely by the great Spanish conflict. We begin to see what Díaz meant when she wrote in conclusion that Matute “has not written an autobiographical novel, in the sense of the word.” No, not as autobiography proper; but certainly in another sense — fragments of a real life, disguised and reformulated, imbedding themselves in the fictive framework. This particular prey of the trace-reader is informative of the functioning of the creative process.

Similarly, the Matia of *La trampa* (now forty-two years old at the time of the narration proper) also reveals traces of the referent, Matute. Both author and character are in the United States (in Bloomington, Indiana) in the year 1964; concerning this there is exact reciprocity between reality and fiction. Both of them are separated or divorced from their husbands by the mid-1960s; both have attended the MLA Convention at the Sheraton Hotel (Matia with her father, Frank); both suffer from stomach ulcers, that “dolor que podría decirse ácido, lacerante,”¹⁵ described by Matia; and both women have an only son. But there is more to the autobiographical trace at play in *La trampa* than this. While the narrative style of *Primera memoria* was “dedicated”¹⁶ to the adolescent Matia, that of *La trampa* has passed from apparent simplicity to a mode of expression that is baroque, complex, and at times heavy. This new and different density of prose in *La trampa* also succeeds remarkably well at matching the more mature and charged voices (bearing the weight of years and added layers of experience) of Matia as an adult. But it is what is clothed by the style — the content — that reveals Matute in Matia. Both women see themselves as alienated, alone, and scarred by life; there is a sadness about them; and pessimism, verging at times on cynicism, characterizes their outlook on life and their own circumstances. This, style and content, is also autobiographical, though certainly not “in the most literal sense.”¹⁷ Again, the border dividing outside from inside has vanished in the act of trace-reading the autobiographical element in *Primera memoria* and *La trampa*.

Having thus complemented the survey made by Janet Díaz of instances of autobiography in Matute’s fiction, I now turn

my attention to the second thread of trace-reading packed into the word “autobiography”: only this time the emphasis on “bio” (life of the author) will yield to the other two-thirds of the signifier’s composition, “auto” (self) and “graphy” (writing). In this manner, the trace-reading neologism “autography” emerges, which can be read as AUTObioGRAPHY, or the virtual self-writing of Matia’s story in *La trampa*. This, as we shall see, provides another set of textual potentialities for the trace-reader to realize.

The fictive story of Matia in *Los mercaderes* begins at the end, that is, in the third and final novel, *La trampa*, rather than at the beginning, *Primera memoria*. This inversion, or play of the supplement, was already inscribed in the very first sentence of *Primera memoria* (note the temporal perspective, the imperfect descriptive tense revealing a looking-back that does not correspond to an adolescent fourteen-year-old.)¹⁸ The point is made more specifically on page 20, when a supposedly youthful narrator thinks to herself that:

(Aquí estoy ahora, delante de este vaso tan verde, y el corazón pesándome. ¿Será verdad que la vida arranca de escenas como aquélla? ¿Será verdad que de niños vivimos la vida entera, de un sorbo, para repetirnos después estúpidamente, ciegamente, sin sentido alguno?)¹⁹

Even the semiotic cue, now a trace-cue, of the parenthetical offsetting serves to reinforce boldly for the reader what is adumbrated in the inaugural sentence of the novel: that this is no adolescent narrative perspective through which the novel is unfolding.

The play of the supplement continues when we discover in *La trampa*, some 500 pages later, that the forty-two-year-old Matia, engaged in the writing of a diary, alludes to another text: “Tengo la mordiente sensación de que en algún tiempo escribí un verdadero diario.”²⁰ Ironically, the reader realizes that, with respect to the trilogy proper, this is an intra-inter-textual allusion by *La trampa* to its supplement, *Primera memoria*. For what other time and text — trace — better corresponds as an answer to Matia’s implied question (Did I or did I not at one time write a real diary?) than the textual proof

of her “first memoirs”? Already we are caught up in the play of writing and the supplement, linking *Primera memoria* and *La trampa* intimately to the blanket text, *Los mercaderes*. Traces and supplements of one another, these two novels are simply, in the end, different books (manifestations) of one text, the personal drama of Matia. What writing itself will reveal to us in this instance is an aesthetics of the trace — of narrative composition and reconstitution of reality — principally responsible for the artistic creation of the protagonist. This thread of trace-reading will begin at the very place where grammatology and the trace-reader are inscribed in the novel *La trampa*.

The Matia with whom the reader renews contact, 28 years and 227 pages “after” *Primera memoria*, is engaged in the act of written retrospection subtitled “Diario en desorden.” The very form of this particular narrative subdivision lays bare the compositional process itself: Matia’s story will be a “zurcido de realidades visibles e invisibles, de pasado y presente sombríamente superpuestos” that takes into account as fully as possible “los espectros de otras realidades (futuras, pasadas, olvidadas, inmediatas)” because nothing is ever simply “su nombre, a secas.” The fictive reality of the adult Matia is the result of “el cúmulo de circunstancias (...) Todo (...) Los detalles más nimios” that “un viento extraño (the phenomenon of fictive “presence” itself) reúne, aglutina, da forma y sentido.”²¹ The story of Matia will be a “recapitulation of ages of existence, of landscapes and encounters” that “oblige” the reader to situate the protagonist in the perspective of what she has been.²² In this manner the narrative discourse of *La trampa* repeats the Derridian notion of “trace,” issuing instructions for the appropriate reader response, i.e. the activity of trace-reading.

Once again, in *La trampa*, Matia is back on the island of Majorca in her grandmother’s house. But we discover that the circular journey of our reading only takes us back to Matia and Majorca after many stops along the way, an itinerary we must cover if we’re to understand better the nature of Matia’s reality in *La trampa* (which is the same as saying in *Los mercaderes*, for the trilogy itself is but an instrument for the com-

munication of the cautionary tale realized by Matia).²³ Our spatio-temporal route, then, is the following: Puerto Rico, where Matia's father lived in exile as a result of the Spanish Civil War; Mansilla de la Sierra, alluded to indirectly when Matia fondly recalls her old governess, Mauricia; Madrid; W. High School and the city of F with its University, an autobiographical allusion to Bloomington and Indiana University, where Matute spent a semester as writer-in-residence in 1964; the MLA Convention at the Sheraton Hotel; Brown County, the "Hoosier Restaurant," and the trailer park (the latter being where Matia's marriage to David sours); and various European countries that had been visited by Beverly, Matia's mother-in-law, who recommends travel to Matia as a way of "forgetting" about David. Other places through which the reader also must pass on the way back to Majorca, and the house of *doña* Práxedes, are Mario's home in Barcelona, the Spanish city of Z, the port of Villanueva, Paris, New Mexico, etc., etc. The reader must come to terms with this extensive geography because it is crucial to his or her textually pre-programmed role. The Majorca of *La trampa* owes itself to the stops along the way: i.e. the places — the traces — define the place.

Time also must be recapped if we are to begin to do justice to the story of Matia in *La trampa*. To begin with, Matute makes it quite difficult for the trace-reader even to piece together the exact chronological time of the action — three days in June of 1964.²⁴ But this time can only be properly appreciated if it is viewed as a composite; that is, in context with the other times that have led us, the characters, and Matia to the culminating events of those three days. Matia's time in *La trampa* is nurtured by the respective times of the other characters, and the events and experiences that have left an imprint on her: the Spanish Civil War; the text of *Primera memoria*, with her betrayal and denial of her only friend, Manuel; the tyranny of *doña* Práxedes; Matia's marriage and divorce; the frustration of Borja, waiting for the *abuela* to die so that he could inherit her wealth; Mario's secret; and the pathetic and futile gesture of her own son, Bear.²⁵ Because all of these elements — here necessarily abbreviated — inscribe them-

selves in the time of Matia, sacrificing themselves, effacing themselves, in order to produce her. It is, as Margaret Jones has written, a situation where "the past surges up into the present, parallel episodes eerily meet, fused by the repetition of an action in the present that had already occurred in the past," in which there is simultaneously a "move from the linear conception of history into the spiralling succession of events."²⁶ Such that if we were to represent graphically (a temporal blueprint) the composition of Matia's time, it would take the form of a straight line, a spiral, and a series of dots and dashes, overlapping one another at given points. This schema would have to be both visible and invisible, since it would reflect both external (physical) and internal (psychological) events in *La trampa*. In other words, it would have to show that there is "real" action in the novel, although it is frequently broken up and overshadowed by flashbacks; Matia acts out the limited plot in the present, but lives more in the past.

In this way, Matute attempts to give us the reality that belongs to Matia alone in *La trampa*. But we discover that *La trampa* owes itself to *Primera memoria*, for the adolescent Matia is the seed out of which the antiheroine of the concluding novel was born. Yet, through the paradox of the supplement, the fictional author of *Primera memoria* is none other than the Matia who is writing her "Diario en desorden" in *La trampa*. Simultaneously, both novels that recount the story of Matia owe a great deal of themselves to the autobiographical instances that Matute has imbedded in her fiction. And it is as trace-readers that we respond more fully to these aspects of the narrative repertoire that calls forth our collaboration. Inevitably, necessarily, my own trace-reading of Matia/Matute has imposed "structures to delimit and arrest play" of the textual signifier entitled *Los mercaderes*. But even this admission, this reminder, is a sobering deconstruction of itself: for the traces and supplements at play in the trilogy have always already initiated other readings.

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NOTES

1. Professor Cohen made this comment during his seminar at the School of Criticism and Theory, Northwestern University, summer 1982.

2. The two books by Derrida that I use in this article are: *Speech and Phenomena and Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), and *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974). In the course of presenting my genealogy of the trace-reader, this bibliographic information will be given in parentheses, with the respective titles abbreviated as *SP* and *G*.

3. For more on the typology of the reader see Johnathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1982); Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), and also Iser's *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward An Aesthetic of Reception* (University of Minnesota: The Harvester Press, 1982); Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, *The Reader in the Text* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980); Jane Tompkins, *Reader-Response Criticism: From Formalism to Post-Structuralism* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980). Of particular interest for an overview of this typology is Tompkins' book. Briefly, the readers I mention are: the implied reader, whose concept is a textual structure anticipating the presence of a recipient without necessarily defining him (Iser); the ideal reader "who would understand perfectly the least of the author's words, the most subtle of his intentions" (Prince); the virtual reader, one that the author "has in mind while aware that he is writing for someone else other than himself," bestowed "with certain qualities, faculties, and inclinations" (Prince); the super or multiple reader of Riffaterre; the mock reader whose mask and costume the real reader takes on in order to experience the language of the text being read (Gibson); and, finally, the informed or at-home reader who straddles the functions of several of those listed above, being a hybrid "real reader (me) who does everything within his power to make himself informed" (Fish). These readers, of course, stem from the real or actual reader who holds the book being read in his or her hands.

4. The two novels of *Los mercaderes* that I am concerned with here are: *Primera memoria*, 7th ed. (1960; rpt. Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1973), and *La trampa* (Barcelona: Ediciones Destino, 1971).

5. From Vincent B. Leitch on Joseph N. Riddel's account of reading and misreading in *Deconstructive Criticism: An Advanced Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983, p. 99), and Wolfgang Iser,

The Implied Reader, p. 280. Vincent Leitch's book on deconstructive criticism is an excellent introduction to and summary of Derrida's project, with a wealth of information also on the activities and tendencies of other deconstructive theorists and critics.

6. Vincent B. Leitch, p. 36.

7. See Spivak's introduction to her translation of *Of Grammatology*, p. xxxix.

8. A phrase coined by Roland Barthes.

9. Vincent B. Leitch, p. 28.

10. *Encyclopedic Dictionary of the Science of Language* by Oswald Ducrot and Tzvetan Todorov, trans. Catherine Porter (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979, p. 350).

11. Iser, *The Implied Reader*, pp. 166-7 and 214.

12. Iser, *The Act of Reading*, p. 27.

13. In Jane Tompkins' *Reader-Response Criticism*, p. 5.

14. Janet Winecoff Díaz, "Autobiographical Elements in the Works of Ana María Matute," *Kentucky Romance Quarterly* (Spring 1970, pp. 139-148).

15. Matute, *La trampa*, 81.

16. This is a photographic term meaning a perfect match.

17. Díaz, "Autobiographical Elements."

18. Matute, *Primera memoria*: "Mi abuela tenía el pelo blanco" (p. 9).

19. Matute, *Primera memoria*, p. 20.

20. Matute, *La trampa*, p. 23.

21. Matute, *La trampa*, pp. 26 and 184.

22. Goerges Gusdorf, "Conditions and Limits of Autobiography," in *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical*, ed. James Olney (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 38).

23. Although *Los mercaderes* contains a total of 109 characters, all of these are incidental to the story of Matia and her version of the horror of Civil War and post-Civil War Spain.

24. I have examined this aspect of the trilogy in greater detail in my chapter "The Title, Setting, Action, and Narrative Structure" of *La trampa* (pp. 328-345) in my dissertation "*Los mercaderes: A Literary World by Ana María Matute*" (University Microfilms International, 1981).

25. The futile gesture that I refer to is what Matute considers the fruit of the post-war era in Spain as it is portrayed in *Los mercaderes*.

26. See Margaret Jones' article "Temporal Patterns in the Works of Ana María Matute," in *Romance Notes* (XII, No. 2, 1971).