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Children of the Spanish Civil War

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> *"Incluso nosotros, que somos tan jóvenes, nunca volveremos a ser aquellos niños tontos que no sabían lo que era carecer de pan, sufrir por sus padres y recinar de miedo pensando que puedes morir en cualquier instante."* (Díaz Garrido 165)

War is fighting for a cause; war is the survival of political and economic ideology; war is masculine; war is adult—but is it? Vietnam, Bosnia, Serbia, to mention but a few recent examples, tell a different story. The front pages of our daily newspapers, the TV images in our living rooms, the magazine covers in our mailboxes shock us with the horror-stricken faces of innocent children of war, haunting us in their fear and desperation. . . : "Y luego dicen que las guerras las luchan los hombres en el frente" (Castresana 81). All wars are horrific for all those involved, but without a doubt, for children, civil war is the worst kind of war, especially when the two sides are not clearly geographically defined, when conflicting loyalties and ideologies exist within the same region, within the same community, often within the same family, resulting in confusion, in lack of understanding, and in extreme emotional insecurity and stress.

In the prolific literature of the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the voices of children have remained largely silent and their experiences neglected; yet the lives of thousands of Spanish children were disrupted by the hardships of the long civil war, and their physical, social, moral, and emotional development from childhood to adulthood[1] was complicated by fear, bombings, shocking violence, loneliness, hunger, and extremes of weather conditions. The war experiences of children in the Spanish Civil War may be gleaned indirectly through a variety of literary sources produced during the war itself. Although children's experiences may not have been the specific focus of literary works written by adults at that time, many of these works—autobiographies, memoirs, documentaries, novels, short stories—indirectly give some notion of what it was like to be a child during those war years. Examples include Arturo Barea's collection of war stories/scenes, *Valor y miedo* (1938); Constancia de la Mora's *In Place of Splendor: The Autobiography of a Spanish Woman* (1939); Florence Farmborough's *Life and People of Nationalist Spain* (1938). Other literary resources include memoirs, "testimonial" novels, and documentaries written or reported many years later by authors who had lived the war as

children. Examples include Ignacio Aldecoa's *Cuentos* (1961); María del Carmen Díaz Garrido's *Los años únicos: Andanzas de una niña en el Madrid rojo* (1972); Manuel Lamana's *Los inocentes* (1959); Luis de Castresana's *El otro árbol de Guernica* (1967); Rafael Abella's *La vida cotidiana durante la Guerra Civil* (1978); José María Gironella's *Un millón de muertos* (1960); Ana María Matutue's *Primera memoria* (1959); Ronald Fraser's *Blood of Spain: An Oral History of the Spanish Civil War* (1979); Alfonso Albalá's war trilogy—*El secuestro* (1968), *Los días de odio* (1969), *El fuego* (1979); and Luisa Pérez-Pérez's *Il Generalissimo* (1992). These works, based on memory, are, by necessity, to be considered cautiously from an historical perspective,[2] for the intervening years have "given Civil War children the chance to work out what the Civil War meant to them and how specific events and ideas of the war had fit into their lives" (Marten 26). An individual author has thus had an opportunity "to give himself identity, to place himself in the context of history, geography and social change, and so to make a kind of sense out of an existence which might otherwise seem meaningless" (Marten 26). Clearly, accounts written long after the events took place, especially "fictionalized" accounts may contain errors of fact. There may also exist the authors' desire to ennoble the past, to justify and validate it, to create a set of values giving their adult lives meaning, and to confirm what they believe happened (Marten 27; Fraser 30-32). There may also be present a tendency to exaggerate and embellish (Gironella 11). In any event, their memories reflect "what they thought or what they thought they thought" (Fraser 32), and thus they reflect *their* truth. Also a larger queston arises as to which author reflects with more veracity the experiences of children: the adult who as a child lived the experiences about which he/she later writes or an adult who creates fiction dealing with childrens' experiences without having lived through similar situations? This study, formulated within this ambiguous context, is written to examine the plight and lives of children during the Spanish Civil War as evidenced through the sampling of the literary works mentioned above. Although these works may vary greatly in their literary merit, they do represent a collage of the psychological history of the human documentation and insights sought.

Clearly, the war affected children to varying degrees in different parts of Spain, but it did affect them all. María Carmen Quero, who experienced the war as a nine-year-old, years later summarizes: "Like everyone of my age, my youth seems to have been nothing but disaster and violence, tragedy and horror: sometimes on account of the reds, other times because of the whites" (Fraser 304).

Children as Witnesses and Victims of Violence

The most obvious effect of the war on children was their exposure to

bombings, gunfire, street fighting, house searches, and other types of martial violence. Without reference to political leanings or affiliations, bombs are bombs, gunshots are gunshots, and children were often their innocent victims, unfortunately, in the wrong place at the wrong time. Vallecas, a small working-class community just outside of Madrid and in no way a military target, fell victim to bombing raids of the fascists "trimotores," sending women and children scurrying in all directions seeking cover. One woman, holding an infant in her arms, urgently called her other five children, all of whom approached her running. At that moment, the plane discharged its load leaving twenty-three bodies and three wounded on the landscape:

> La mujer cayó muerta en la puerta de su casa. Los trozos de carne del niño estaban mezclados con los trozos de carne de la madre. La hija mayor . . . cayó muerta sobre el cadáver de su hermana de doce. Uno de los niños de seis años, quedó tendido en el suelo, vivo, falto de un pie y la espalda abierta. Otro de diez años, ileso, pero echando sangre por sus orejas, reventados sus oídos por las explosiones, salió corriendo, llevando a través del campo el cuerpo de la hermanita menor de cuatro años. Lo llevó él mismo hasta la casa de socorro: había recibido el polvo de la metralla y tenía más de cien heridas diminutas en su cuerpecito. (Barea, "Proeza," *Valor y miedo* 24)

Eyewitness Constancia de la Mora describes the bombing of Jaen:

> I went down the street shortly afterwards [after the bombings]. They were taking the children away to a special morgue where their mothers could come to look for them. But most of them could never be identified, even by their mothers—they were torn to bits. (308)

The blitz of Guernica by a Condor Legion was announced by the tolling of the church bells that April evening of 1937. The town unfortunately had not taken adequate precautions, and shelters were scarce, rudimentary, and were packed that day:

> . . . Manolita Aquirre had gone with girlfriends to the plain that began at the edge of the town. There had

> been no school that day. As they were playing, they saw the planes coming. Workers shouted at them to get into the shelter close by the small-arms factory. As they ran in they heard the *tat-tat-tat* of the fighters' machine-guns. An old man pulled out a religious medallion and gave it to her to kiss. 'Pray, child, pray, the planes are bombing us 470. . . .' (Fraser 399)

There was smoke everywhere, the town began to burn, panic was rampant.

After the blitz of Guernica, many were evacuated to Bilbao. The Ozamiz family with four children took refuge there with an aunt. Unfortunately, the peril continued in the new location: "When they heard the sirens, they put mattresses against the windows; it was the only shelter they had" (Fraser 402).

Red Madrid suffered the most frequent and intense bombings. Of Nationalist persuasion, twelve-year-old Pituca and her father are caught in the bombing of Cibeles by the Nationalist planes, and father and daughter narrowly escape:

> Una nube de polvo nos envolvió. Oímos gritos. Papá me epujó y tiró de mí hacia el suelo. El estruendo fue inmenso. Cuando abrí los ojos, mareada y medio sorda, vi un boquete en la esquina del Banco de España, a unos metros de donde estábamos. En los primeros peldaños de las escaleras del metro, en un charco de sangre, había un hombre. Le noté algo raro. ¡No tenía cabeza! Me dieron ganas de vomitar. (Díaz Garrido 65)

De la Mora describes the slaughter of children in the bombings of Barcelona during the last days of the war:

> Two thousand dead. Thousands more in hospitals screaming. Legs—just a leg, blown off some child's torso—lying on the bloody sidewalk. No shelter. No possible place to hide. No *refugio* that would not be a tomb. (355)

Street fighting also threatens the safety of children. Pituca and her father in another incident are caught in the crossfire, yet somehow they survive: "Y como dos fantasmas seguimos nuestra marcha. Haraposos,

esqueléticos, yo llevaba una trenza suelta; mi padre, la calva llena de barro" (Díaz Garrido 167).

In addition, there was the terror of the house searches. Carlos Castilla del Pino recalls an evening in his hometown, San Roque, near Gibraltar in July 1936 when he was thirteen-years-old. Popular Front militiamen come to the door of his home:

> —Nine gunshots—I counted them—was the way they knocked. My uncle opened the door. Three men came in, two with shotguns and wearing white shirts with their sleeves rolled up, red neckerchiefs, red armbands. The other man wore a steel helmet, the first I had ever seen, and sergeant's insignia; in his left hand a sabre and in his right a large pistol. . . . (Fraser 156)

Carlos also lived through the trauma caused by the shooting deaths of family members:

> His uncle had been shot in the streets and had managed to crawl to the doorway of a republican house where he was shot again. His body showed twenty-one bullet wounds, one of them in the toes. (156)

Carlos goes on:

> His other uncle and cousin were lying dead in the street. Uncle Miguel's face had crashed on the pavement with such force that the blood marks could not be removed and the paving stone had to be replaced. (157)

Peril of violent death also existed in other forms. Four-year-old Luisa Pérez-Pérez was born in Spanish Sahara where her father served as military governor, appointed by the Republican government. In 1936, he was called to an emergency military meeting in Las Palmas, Canary Islands, where he was briefed by Franco on the planned military coup. He refused to participate in the uprising because he considered that doing so would be treason against his oath of allegiance to the government then in power. On the pretext of a change in assignment, he was ordered to embark that same night, destination unknown. He embarked that night as ordered, but he brought his entire family—a wife and three children—with him. Even at

her young age, Luisa understood the danger:

> Il primo ricordo è una nave. Tre bambini chiusi in una cabina. Ogni tanto il viso pallido di mia madre che ci guarda dalla porta e poi scompare. Dopo, Guillermina mi ha detto che nostro padre non voleva essere comandato da uno che si chiamava Franco e per questo sarebbe stato ucciso e forse anche noi. (11)

Luisa theorizes that because his family was with him, her father was spared being shot and thrown overboard, as others on the same voyage were. Luisa's family instead was abandoned on the island of Gomera in the Canaries where they spent the war years in exile.

In war, especially in civil war, the threat of rape by the opposing military forces is an omnipresent, almost tangible fear. Nine-year-old María Carmen remembers having had to move from place to place for safety's sake, and she finally finds refuge in a clinic. One day she and her fellow refugees hear shouts in the street. She recalls the scene thus:

> The nursing nuns told everyone to go down to the basement. Outside the shouts grew closer, louder. 'Let's go in and get them!' María Carmen was old enough to know what that meant. (Fraser 303)

She continues:

> —I felt at that moment as though I had been born only to die. We all knelt and prayed. Even Dr. Gálvez thought the reds were going to break in. 'As long as it doesn't hurt too much,' I said to myself. . . . (Fraser 303)

Thirteen-year-old Carlos in San Roque, near Gibraltar, reports:

> An anarchist couple, whose son was a school-mate of mine, was taken to a village 25 km away and shot. From a falangist who was present, I later heard that the woman had been raped by the whole Moorish firing squad before being executed. (Fraser 157)

Pituca witnesses the *milicianos* arresting the mother of her friend Pepita who lived upstairs in the apartment house. Pepita's sister, Ana María, hysterically and uselessly tries to stop them. She slaps one of the men,

accusing him of having killed her father. The *miliciano* angrily responds:

> —Vendrás con tu madre. Y no iréis precisamente a la cárcel; os reservo otra cosa mejor. (Díaz Garrido 86)

Young orphan children, abandoned without food in orphanages by the fleeing nuns, were given shelter and food by Constancia de la Mora's women volunteers. The children were very afraid, and one little child affirmed:

> The Sisters said you [de la Mora's women volunteers] would be very cruel to us and beat us and they said the *milicianos* would rape us. (250)

Not all children witnessed the violence of the war directly. For some, newspapers and the radio were their link to the horrors. Fourteen-year-old Matia in Matute's *Primera memoria* spent the war years in Mallorca with her grandmother because the war had prevented her from returning home. Her father supported the Reds while her grandmother supported the Nationalists. From time to time Matia saw war planes on the horizon, but the newspapers where her basic source of information:

> . . . Y los periódicos de la abuela, con sus horrendas fotografías — ¿pastiche? ¿realidad? ¡Qué más daba! — de hombres abiertos, colgando de ganchos, como reses, en los quicios de las puertas. (Matute 35)

Later, the newspapers reported more and more horrors:

> Horrores y horrores, hombres enterrados vivos . . . . Ciudades bombardeadas, batallas perdidas, batallas ganadas. Y allí, en la isla, en el pueblo, la espesa y silenciosa venganza. (Matute 180)

The radio and newspapers also serve as a souce of information for those childred who did indeed witness the violence. The hidden, contraband radio in a friend's apartment brings "Radio Nacional" reports of the war's progress to Díaz Garrido's Pituca in *Los años únicos* (30).

Lamana's Luisito reports in *Los inocentes:*

> Lo decían los periódicos, la radio lo repetía. Las comadres de los barrios hablaban de muertos y de combates. Los hombres, pistola al cinto, se paseaban por las calles. Llevaban muerte en los ojos. Llevaban

> muerte en las manos. Era matar or ser muerto. (19)

Children and Their Play

Regardless of the daily perils of war, children are children, and children are drawn to their daily routine of play. Twelve-year-old Fernando, the fictionalized narrative voice of Alfonso Albalá's Civil-War trilogy, speaks frequently of his "jugando en la calle," an activity which was first interrumpted in Coria, Cáceres, by the political rumblings of the 1931 elections with shouts of "Viva la República." Once the war broke out, his "jugando en la calle" juxtaposes with the sad scenes of families bringing fallen fathers, husbands, or sons from the front for burial (*Días de odio* 31). His "jugando en la calle" is stifled by ". . . el clima asfixiante, hostil e inexplicable con que el miedo reducía a niñez acosada nuestros juegos" (*Días de odio* 50).

Twelve-year-old Pituca begs her mother to allow her to play ball with her friends on La Calle Duque de Rivas in Madrid:

> —Anda, mamá, ¡déjame bajar! No pasará nada, te lo aseguro. Si oigo silbar obuses, o tocar las sirenas, corro a esconderme al portal más próximo y después, en un salto, estoy aquí. (59)

However, Pepita, another child from the same apartment building, refuses Pituca's invitation to join in the daily games for fear of being recognized by the oposition:

> Pepita, con mucha pena, dijo que ella sí que no podía salir. Si descubrían por una imprudencia donde estaban, podrían llevarse a su madre. (61)

It was the daily routine of fourteen-year-old Luisito, who lived in Madrid, to play checkers, and "Las primeras noticas [de la guerra] le sorprendieron jugando a las damas" (Lamana 9). His life was completely altered ". . . desde ese día en que la partida familiar de damas había sido reemplazada por el comentario sobre la sublevación" (9). He tries not to let the bombings disrupt his way of life:

> Cuando volvieron a bajar al sótano, por el siguiente bombardeo, Luisito se llevó un ajedrez en miniatura que había dejado preparado y tuvo tiempo de jugar dos partidas con Fidel. (13)

As eleven-year-old Santi of Castresana's *El otro árbol de Guernica* is being evacuated to Brussels from his home town in Bilbao, he sees his friends as they continue their normal activity of playing ball in the street, and he experiences a strong desire to stay and join them (17).

But war as *war* infiltrates children's play, and literature abounds with examples of children playing soldier.[3] For example, *Majito*, in Galdós' *La desheredada*, with play military cap and saber in hand, shouts, "¡Soy Plim[4]!" (1000 a-b). Children are almost naturally attracted to war and act out what they see and hear (Marten 158): ". . . con un palo al hombro y una gorra de papel en la cabeza . . .", *Majito* attracts an army of followers as he heads down the street in his mock military attire (Galdós 1000b):

> En la calle de Ercilla tenía ya un séquito de seis muchachos; en la del Labrador ya se le había incorporado una partida de diecisiete. . . Los tres chicos del capataz de la fundición de hierro salieron batiendo marcha sobre una plancha de latón, y pronto se agregaron a ellos, para aumentar tan dulce orquesta, los dos del tendero, tañendo . . . golpes a compás sobre una lata de petróleo. (1001a)

The scene continues:

> En un momento se vió a la partida proveerse de palos de escoba, cañas, varas, con esa rapidez puramente española, que no es otra cosa que el instinto de armarse; y, sin saber cómo, surgieron picudos gorros de papel con flotantes cenefas que arrebataba el viento, y aparecieron distintivos varios, hechos al arbitrio de cada uno. . . . (1001a)

Rafael Abella also reminds us that similarly during the Spanish Civil War, playing war with wooden guns was much the order of the day (57).

For some children actual implements of war become their playthings, much like football trading cards. Arturo Barea describes a scene of street urchins after a bombing raid in Madrid:

> Pero cuando hay bombardeo, en el callejón se reúne el cónclave y todos acuerdan marcharse a verlo de cerca y recoger cascos de granada todavía calientes. . . . Se disputan la posesión de los trozos de metralla para sus colecciones. Se los cambian y se los venden.

> El feliz poseedor de una espoleta llegó un día a obtener por ella el pago de una peseta por otro chico. . . . El vendedor explicaba entusiasmado cómo se arrojó a recogerla ardiente del suelo. . . . La espoleta aquella era de un obús de 22,5. ("Juguetes" 45)

These same children use the spent shells they have collected as actual weapons by throwing them against the window of a woman they suspect of being fascist:

> . . . Se proveyeron de cascotes y desplegados en fila india se llegaron cautelosamente ante una ventana. . . . Allí en semicírculo a la voz del capitán, descargaron sus municiones contra la ventana sombría. (45)

Children are fascinated by war, have an enthusiasm for it, and are attracted to it. War photos abound of children admiring the artefacts of war—a brother's gun or a father's helmet (Abella 53). In Aldecoa's "Patio de armas," young school boys are fascinated by the knife of an Italian soldier billeted at the house of one of them. In their boyish chatter, they dispute if the knife is a "cimitarra" or an "alfanje" or a "bayoneta vulgar" (96). As Marten explains: "In fact, young children rather easily understand war and other forms of political strife because their own games and stories revolve around violence and competition" (24-25). Many youngsters aged fourteen to seventeen went far beyond play. They heeded the call to arms and ran away from their homes to go to the front on both sides (Abella 56). The stories of these young heroes constitute a different chapter in the history of the War; this essay, however, limits itself to the children of the rearguard, of those fourteen and under who experienced the war on the home front.

Children, Politics, and Patriotism

Many children readily understand the politics[5] of war and that opposing sides and ideologies exist (Marten 24-26). Generally, children accept their family's political ideologies, but often there are divisions within the same family. Twelve-year-old Juan Narcea remembers being beaten by other boys because he was considered to be the son of a bourgeois. He explains:

> —They did a fairly good job on me. Children were then clearly divided between right and left. Before the war there were two kids' football teams in town, one for the right- and the other for the left-wing. (Fraser 431)

Division existed within Juan's own family. His eldest brother, José, a doctor, was a man of liberal beliefs. The next brother, Francisco, a lawyer, was an extreme conservative. A third brother, Timoteo, a dentist, was a member of the communist party while a fourth, Leopoldo, a chemist, was a member of the Falange (Fraser 431). Juan felt himself to be on the Nationalist side even when two of his brothers were executed because of their political beliefs. He later was less sure when he witnessed the killing of refugees by the Nationalists (433).

Twelve-year-old Fernando is confused by the political realities that surround him. His observations reveal to him that the poor, those who have no land, are leftists, but his family is poor and has no land, yet they are rightists or traditionalists. The question haunts him into adulthood:

> . . . Aún me pregunto por qué estamos nosotros de su parte. Digo que sería porque éramos cristianos; pero es que luego he visto bien claro que . . . los menos cristianos eran, y aún lo son, los ricos. (*Días de odio* 105)

The right/left conflict bewilders him. He finds merit in the political argument that "España ha vivido así muchos años: como siempre. Empobreciendo sus pobres un poco más cada día, y enriqueciéndose sus ricos otro poco más, cada día" (42). Yet he cannot accept the stance of the left, which he not only translates as drunkenness, immorality, disrespect, and violence nightly overheard in the goings-on of the leftist *Bar de la República* located within earshot of his bedroom window, but which he also witnesses daily in the streets in the tactile, thick hatred of the unemployed in the streets of Coria. His own childlike solution to the political unrest is a middle-of-the-road stance.

Other children, although they have great loyalty to their parents[6] and to their political beliefs, really did not comprehend the debate. Santi reports the following when he and his friends learn of the defeat of the Republican side:

> Y se miraban unos a otros, silenciosamente, y no lo querían creer. No sabían muy bien qué se debatía en aquella guerra, ni por qué habían luchado. La política era como trabajar, como fumar, como mandar o como ir al café o a la taberna: cosa de hombres. (Castresana 216)

Regardless of their families' political views, children on both sides demonstrated strong patriotic feelings:

> Toda esta escenografía patriótica tensa y vibrante se grababa indeleblemente en unos niños que tenían que ser algo: "balillas", después "flechas", o "pelayos", o hasta "rayos" de la JAP, que lucían sus camisitas y sus boinitas, y a quienes se enseñaba la instrucción para que desfilaran en todas las celebraciones cantando himnos y manejando fúsiles de madera. . . . (Abella 57)

As a boy[7] of twelve, Albalá's Fernando found the war fascinating: the uniforms of the Falange, the rifles, the parades, the flags,[8] the war songs, the bugle calls, the belief in the "cause."

Often, patriotism carried its dangers. Fiercely Nationlist Pituca in Díaz Garrido's novel joins the Socorro Blanco, a youth group that makes flags and distributes propaganda. Trying to convince her parents to allow her to join, Pituca explains:

> . . . Son todos tan pequeños y ya hacen algo para ayudar a ganar la guerra. No podemos estar así, sólo resistiendo. ¡Yo quiero apuntarme! Quiero ser del Socorro Blanco. (83-84)

She realizes that if her activities become known, arrest and possible death at the hands of the enemy were inevitable (85).

Children were also specifically taught to be patriotic. Farmborough, an Englishwoman who worked for the National Broadcasting Station of Salamanca, recounts a scene she witnessed in which a three-year-old child clicks his heels, draws himself to full attention, and solemnly salutes a large portrait of Generalisimo Franco displayed in a shop window (25).

Children in Adult Roles

Youngsters often did their part in very concrete ways to support the war effort. Farmborough marveled that children knit woolen garments to help soldiers combat the cold:

> There are children who can scarcely hold the needles, but insist on doing their share; young girls, full of life and energy, whose nimble fingers work with lightening-like speed. . . . (33)

Because of circumstances, children often, willingly or unwillingly, found themselves assuming the role and responsibilities of adults, thus stunting or even totally eliminating the developmental stage of childhood from their lives. Julia, a young girl who experiences the frequent Nationalist bombings in Madrid, repeats the actions and good works of her father by bringing people to safety in her old stone house during the air raids. Her father used to shout: "Pasen, pasen, esto es de piedra, garantizao [sic] contra Mussolini" (Barea, "Héroes," *Valor y miedo* 77). In his altruistic attempt to save others, the father was killed by the bombs, but Julia continues his mission of mercy. She in turn exhorts the neighbors, including the children playing in the street, with the same words: "Pasen, pasen, esto es de piedra, garantizado contra Mussolini" (78). When the neighborhood women ask how she is getting along, she responds with resignation filled with a sense of duty:

> —¿Cómo quiere usted que esté? Con las entrañas negras y con un susto diario. Me han ofrecido evacuarme a Valencia. Pero yo me quedo en Madrid. Además, me parece que mi padre está conmigo y no tengo miedo. ¡Bueno! Miedo sí, que tengo. Pero me parece que está él aquí y tengo un deber. (76)

Díaz Garrido's Pituca assumes the adult role of seeking provisions for her family. She and her companions go to a nearby town to secure food. Walking back, her bundle becomes heavier and heavier, the weather colder and colder:

> Pero poco a poco me fui dando cuenta de que aquello pesaba. . . . Me escocían los ojos de frío. Tenía las manos amoratadas, los pies helados y empezaba a temer de que en aquella forma no podría llegar hasta Madrid. (132)

Her hands bleed from carrying the bag. It starts to snow, and so heavy is the snow that she and her companions are hardly able to walk (133).

Lamana's Luisito and his younger sister are sent from Madrid to Valencia for safety's sake. Suddenly, he felt very responsible for his sister: "... De pronto sintió que sobre él iba a pesar una tremenda responsabilidad. Y le entró miedo" (14). "Tenía catorce años cumplidos. Había dejado de ser niño" (18).

Eleven-year-old Santi takes on the responsibility for his five-year-old sister as they are eavcuated from Bilbao to go to the safety of Belgium:

> —Cuida a tu hermana, hijo—mustió [su madre].
> —Sí, madre.
> —Tú eres ya un chico mayor, Santi; tienes once años. . . . Cúidala mucho. Que no le pase nada a Begoña.
> —No, madre.
> —No la riñas sin ton ni son. Y no la pegues; que a veces, cuando te sale el mal genio. . .
> —No, madre. (19)

And later on the ship, Santi promises Begoña that he will take care of her (20). And to encourage Begoña, Santi finds himself hiding his own fears:

> —Volveremos pronto, ¿verdad, Santi?—preguntó [Begoña].
> —Sí, muy pronto—dijo Santi—. No te preocupes, Bego. La guerra acabará en seguida. Ya verás.
>
> Begoña apoyó nuevamente la cabeza en el hombro de Santi y suspiró con alivio. Sabía que se podía fiar de Santi. Si él decía que volverían pronto, entonces es que volverían pronto. Sintió el peso protector y reconfortante de la mano de Santi sobre su pelo y oyó su voz que repetía, como acunándola:
>
> —No te preocupes, Bego. Pronto estaremos otra vez en casa. (36)

He realizes he must be brave so as not to frighten his sister:

> Santi se dijo . . . que . . . ahora tendría que cuidar de Begoña, hacerse fuerte ante ella y no demostrar ningún miedo ni ninguna preocupación, porque entonces ella se asustaría más y sería peor. (43)

He promises: "Ya sabes que siempre estaré contigo" (45).

Many months later at school in Belgium, when Santi's friend Valentín receives the news of the loss of his father at the front, the child breaks into tears. Santi, like an adult, tries to console him by assuring him that his father died a hero and that he should be proud of him (133). Finally, the child falls asleep, and Santi attends to him as a caring adult would:

> Santi le quitó los zapatos a Valentín, le puso dos

> mantas encima y arrimó las dos camas y se acostó y colocó su mano sobre la espalda del niño. . . . Cada vez que retiraba su mano de la espalda de Valentín, el niño se desasosegaba y Santi volvía a colocarla inmediatamente, procurando no despertarle. (134)

Children were also enormously resourceful in finding ways to help their families survive during the war years. In war-torn Madrid, twelve-year-old Celia knits booties (*zapatitos*) and sells them at a children's clothing store for a hundred *pesetas* per package (57). She explains:

> ¿Ves que fácil resulta sacar cuartos? Sólo hace falta un poco de maña y decisión. Como en Madrid no hay nada de nada, y los milicianos están forrados de dinero, compran cualquier cosa y bien caras. Mis hermanas fabrican cinturones de madera formados por cuadritos de colores, muñecas, juguetes . . . con una segueta, un poco de madera, de chapa, pintura, y cola empezaron.
>
> Yo prefiero ayudar a mi madre en la confección de ropa menuda; nuestros jerseys deshechos sirven para ello. (Díaz Garrido 58)

Pituca, in the same enterprising spirit sells her broken gold watch to a soldier explaining that her father is ill. She's able to make a deal for 500 *pesetas*. She, too, begins making a variety of things to sell. She unravels old sweaters, winds the yarn on cardboard, washes the yarn, and knits children's booties (Díaz Garrido 69). She and her brother Juanito, with the help of their grandfather, make doll-house furniture which they sell to a toy shop (70). She also makes felt shoes for small children using the felt from her mother's old hats (72). Unfortunately, when the old sweaters, old hats, and scraps of wood run out, Pituca's cottage industry comes to an abrupt halt.

Children and Shortages of Food and Fuel

Shortages of food and fuel were rampant during the war years. Children along with the population as a whole tightened their belts, endured relentless pangs of hunger, and suffered from the extreme cold or the unbearable heat. Rationing occurred almost at once. Santi recalls that in Baracaldo "Los alimentos estaban racionados y la comida no sobraba . . ." (Castresana 21). Pituca reports rationing in 1936:

> Me acuerdo que habíamos salido Juanito y yo, con mi madre para ir a vacunarnos contra el tifus, porque si no lo hacíamos no nos daban un certificado para poder sacar la cartilla del pan, pues como ya falta la comida por todos los sitios, nos dan el sumenistro racionado. (Díaz Garrido 24)

Recalling the blockade of food supplies in the Basque region, Manolita Aguirre explains that food had been a problem since the first winter: "Chick-peas, rice, black rye bread, fish. We were going hungry" (Fraser 402).

A journalist in Tarragona reports the following tragic scene:

> . . . Chiquillos que apenas pueden tenerse en pie vagan por las Ramblas con un saco y un bote en busca de algo con que calmar el hambre que los consume. (Abella 318)

Food lines became a daily occurrence, and children helped their families out by standing in line, frequently for hours, for bread, milk, oranges, lentils, and such.

Having left Madrid for a safer Valencia, Luisito, with great boredom and discouragement waits long hours in line spelling the adults in his family:

> A Luisito la cola le desanimó. . . . Era enormamente fastidioso. . . . A veces había tenido que ir a la panadería a hacer cola. . . ; había pasado una hora, o dos, o a veces más, pero al fin le habían dado pan. Otras veces había tenido que ir a la lechería, y le había molestado más, porque en la cola de la lechería sólo había mujeres y niños, y todos con el cacharrito para la leche, o con la botella en la mano; a él que no era mujer, ni se sentía ya niño, no le hacía muy feliz. . . . Pero al final, de todas formas, le daban el litro de leche. . . . (Lamana 57-58)

In Belgium, in the midst of the confusion, loneliness, and anxiety of children being sent off to live with strangers, Santi ". . . recordó las colas de pan y los refugios llenos de niños y de mujeres. . . " (Castresana 81).

In Madrid, Pituca gets up at 6:00 a.m. to go stand in the milk line with her aunt Laura: "Era de noche aún cuando salimos a la calle, pero ya había formada [sic] una cola larga a la puerta del almacén de leche" (Díaz

Garrido 67). The women in line argue and jostle for position: "Aún siguieron protestando y murmurando un buen rato. Aquello era aburridísimo. Hasta las ocho no abrirían. ¡Qué de horas faltaban!" (67).

There are shortages and deprivations of everything by the second winter:

> Y lo peor es que la comida ha desaparecido totalmente. Las colas son cada día mayores. Para poder coger patatas, o un poco de arroz, hay que esperar todo el día y a veces la noche entera. El pan que nos dan es malísimo y casi todos tenemos la boca llena de llagas por su colpa. El racionamiento es poquísimo y a base de lentejas que las llamamos 'las píldoras del doctor Negrín.'[9] (Díaz Garrido 90)

Pituca summarizes the situation in 1939 in these terms: "Estamos todos esqueléticos, completamente muertos de hambre" (162). The worst humiliation, however, for Pituca and her mother is going to the military barracks for leftovers from the military mess:

> Esperar en una cola de sobras de rancho es una cosa infame a la que creo no me acostumbraré en la vida. Pero esto o morir de hambre.
>
> A mamá le cuesta aún más que a nosotros. La veo con qué vergüenza se pone en su sitio en la cola, en medio de la gentuza que nos rodea. (Díaz Garrido 163)

Fuel also became a problem, and its lack was felt by those of all ages. Pituca recalls the situation in early 1937:

> Pasamos un frío tremendo. Como se acabó la leña y todos los trastos viejos, mi madre está quemando muebles sin dar importancia a que sean buenos, de caoba, como la mesa de hoy. El caso es resistir el invierno. (Díaz Garrido 54)

And later she explains: "No hay carbón, no hay leña. No tenemos abrigos, ni calzados. . . (90). She suffers from frostbite as a result of the horrendous Madrid cold:

> He tenido las manos tan hinchadas por los sabañones que me las tuvo que vendar mamá. Mis dedos parecen morcillas amoratadas. No puedo ni hacer punto ni coger la segueta. Y ahora me duelen y hay que ver qué letra estoy haciendo. (Díaz Garrido 111)

When the situation does not improve, going to bed very early is the remedy of choice:

> Hace un frío espantoso. Como no tenemos ni dentro ni fuera del cuerpo, lo estamos pasando muy mal. Mamá nos obliga a acostarnos bien temprano, asegurando que así resistiremos mejor, y no tendremos tanto frío ni tanta hambre. (114)

The summer heat of Madrid is difficult, but so much better than the cold: "Hace calor, pero es una delicia. Da gusto sudar. Nuestros huesos calentitos resisten mejor" (149).

Schooling during the War

And what happened during the war to the principal activity of children—school? In some places as the war progressed school continued to the extent possible; in others, especially in towns near the fronts, school was closed. Because the war broke out in July, 1936, many schools delayed their opening that first year. Such was the case with Lamana's Luisito and Matute's Matia. Some schools were able to open later; others were not; still others opened or closed intermittently, according to the circumstances.

In the midst of the upheaval caused by the war, children's normal anxieties with the schooling process continued during those years. Aldecoa's 1961 short story, "Patio de armas," depicts students in a Marianist school in which scholastic life has been totally disrupted by the war; nevertheless, the biggest preoccupation of these students was their traditional schoolboy fear that they would get into trouble with their teacher. With the war in full force, one student was hopeful that because of the bombing raids, classes would be cancelled! (95).

In "Juguetes," Barea reports the results of school's being closed in a certain area of Madrid:

> La guerra los [estudiantes] ha hecho libres, con una

> libertad salvaje. Los padres trabajan o están en el frente, las madres en las colas. Las escuelas están cerradas en este barrio en guerra, y los nuevos centros están en el interior de la ciudad; los chicos pretextan el peligro para no ir. (45)

Some children do not go to school at all even though they are open because of the possible danger to that child's family: "Out of sight, out of mind," as the old saying goes. Such was the case of Nationalist Pituca who lived in Red Madrid. Her grandfather attempted his hand at "home schooling" with Pituca and her brother, and Pituca read a great deal: Galdós, Valera, etc. Additionally, many nuns hidden throughout the city attempted to earn their keep by giving classes in the homes of "safe" families. Pituca and her brother were shocked at the appearance of their new teacher, Sor Victorina, who taught them typing, shorthand, and gave a literature review:

> Su pelo, muy corto, se rizaba por una permanente menuda, y arriba de él llevaba atado un gran lazo de terciopelo. . . . Los ojos, detrás de unas gafas de montura marrón, aparecían muy pintados. . . . Los labios, muy gordos, llenos de carmín. . . .
>
> Muy bajita y menuda dentro de un traje de chaqueta negro con blusa blanca de cuello redondo. Los zapatos de tacón, altos, torcidísimos y ¡calcetines negros! (Díaz Garrido 71-72)

Luisa Pérez Pérez, exiled to the island of Gamora with her family, goes to school only briefly:

> Quando ci hanno mandato a scuola, siamo tornati indietro di corsa inseguiti dai bambini che ci buttavano pietre. Mio padre ci spiegò che quei banbini facevano così perché lui non era mai andato in chiesa. (12)

He explained that they would be called ". . . 'figli di rosso', oppure atei, ma voi dovete sapere che i rossi sono tutti quelli che non la pensano como loro. . ." (15).

In Coria, Cáceres, Fernando describes the sadness and fear that filled his school at that time:

> Pero de verdad que yo iba a la escuela pensando

> siempre en huir. Lo malo es que no había sitio donde irse. (Albalá, *El fuego* 56)

He appears to equate the sadness embodied in the school to the sadness embedded in the atmosphere as a result of the war, for for him sadness was his basic descriptor of the war. He relates: "Era muy triste ir a la escuela. Estaba frío el pupitre al entrar. . . . Siempre más frío que en la calle. . . . Era muy triste, al menos, ir a la escuela en mi ciudad" (Albalá, *El fuego* 57-58).

School for Santi and the other children evacuated to France and Belgium was quite normal, following the familiar European model. At first, classes were given in Spanish by a Spanish teacher who had accompanied the students abroad (Castresana 70). Later, after a disastrous "home stay" with a Belgian family, Santi, along with one hundred and twenty other children, lived and studied at "Fleury," which was not exactly a "colegio" nor a "pensionado" nor an "orfanato" but a combination of all three concepts. The children were for the most part from Belgium. Classes were given in French, and the normal academic subjects were studied along with music, art, and physical education (115,121). Because he had been so successful in his studies, Santi, when he was thirteen, was sent with two other Belgian youngsters from "Fleury" to study humanities at the "Ateneo" (179). There he studied history, Latin, literature, sciences (biology and physics), as well as mathematics.

Twelve-year-old Juan Narcea was evacuated to Russia where he and his companions were treated royally:

> —It was unforgettable. . . . The Russians looked after us with the greatest devotion, spoiled us endlessly. . . .
>
> We were so spoiled, we believed that everyone else was like us. It was a terrestrial paradise and we couldn't imagine we were an exception. (Fraser 435)

Juan describes his classes:

> All the teaching was in Spanish for the first years, but followed the Russian syllabus with Russian textbooks rapidly translated into Spanish. (435)

Rosa Vega, a school teacher from Madrid, was among the Spanish teachers brought from Spain to help those who had accompanied the children when they were evacuated from Spain. She had joined the Communist Party and had gone to Russia because she believed that the USSR was

educationally very advanced. She thought she would have the opportunity to put into practice new teaching methods—especially the "centre of interest" method [i.e., the choice of a theme which would be studied in its interrelated aspects by children in groups]. She was impressed by the genuine interest of the Russians in the Spanish children, and she praised their concern that the children preserve their culture. She was disappointed to learn, however, that the children were being taught rigidly by subject rather than in the integrated approach and that the lesson plans were strictly spelled out and adhered to. She explains:

> —It was evident that there was considerable fear of individual initiative. In each of the older children's classes, one of the pupils was appointed as invigilator to walk up and down to ensure that the children were studying—a sort of policeman. (Fraser 436)

She was supervised by a Spanish-speaking Russian woman. The weekly self-criticism periods became periods of criticism of others, the purpose of which was. . .

> . . . to keep us feeling frightened and insecure. But then, her [the Russian woman's] task was not to be constructive; it was to be a policewoman to ensure that none of us made remarks hostile to communist orthodoxy. There was a lot of terror, a lot of fear; it was the height of Stalin's show trials. . . . (436)

Feigning illness, Rosa requested that she be sent back to Spain.

Constancia de la Mora's view of the Russian schools was diametrically opposed to Rosa's outlined above. De la Mora, as a well educated woman, was very familiar with educational systems. Her foster daughter, nine-year-old Luli, was among the first of the Spanish children to be evacuated in December of 1936. Luli's letters from Russia reported that plans were underway for an all-Spanish school with Spanish teachers, just as in Spain (280). During the war, de la Mora had the opportunity to visit Luli, and she gives the Russian schools a glowing report:

> I was astonished when I saw Luli's school. The Spanish children lived in beautiful, comfortable surroundings. . . . Children's drawings and newspapers hung from the walls. . . . A fine grand piano stood in the corner—a collective gift from the trade unions and the Soviet Government who

> together provided food, shelter, clothing, teachers for two thousand Spanish children in Russia. The classrooms were light and well ventilated, filled with cheerful modern furniture, movable desks, window boxes of flowers, reproductions of famous paintings. (348-49)

In her view, the children were thriving. She explains:

> I had always managed to send Luli to good schools in Madrid, but even she was deeply impressed by her Russian school. The other Spanish children, sons and daughters of Asturian miners, Castilian peasants, Madrid workers, orphans of the *milicianos*—they found themselves in a paradise of which they had never dreamed. They chattered furiously to us when we arrived, showing us their notebooks, telling us how they had progressed in their Spanish lessons. For this was a Spanish school, conducted in Spanish, by Spanish teachers. The children were being brought up as Spaniards. They were told that some day they would return to their own country. They studied Russian as a foreign language, as other youngsters in other countries study French or German as the case may be. (349)

Although most Spanish children continued to live with their families in Spain during the war, and although an attempt was made by the families to maintain as normal a life as possible under the circumstances, the lives of some children were altered considerably. When the war broke out, many children were left homeless, and many orphanages previously run by religious orders were abandoned. Constancia de la Mora, a liberal whose grandfather had many times been conservative prime minister of Spain, volunteered her services and those of her friends, to care for such children. A staunch Republican, she had great faith in the concepts of democracy. At the ministry in Madrid where she went to volunteer her services, a Republican official paints for her the following picture:

> Not only . . . do we have to care for the children abandoned by the nuns, but we must also find homes

> for the thousands of street urchins who sell papers and lottery tickets and so on. They can't be left at the mercy of the snipers. Many have been killed already, poor children. (246)

He goes on:

> There are thousands of other children whose fathers have gone to war and whose mothers have been drafted to take their places at work. We must find homes for them too. (246)

De la Mora began her work by taking over the care, feeding, housing, and education of eighty little girls who had been abandoned without food in an old convent by nuns who fled for their own safety (248-52). The children were in a pitiful state:

> They all wore dirty, cheap, black flannel dresses. . . . Their faces bore signs of sleeplessness, tears, and smudges; their lifeless hair looked dirty, colorless, and unkempt; each child carried over her shoulder a white cotton bag containing a few miserable belongings. (249)

She and her companions tried to teach them concepts of cleanliness and friendship. Her nine-year-old foster daughter, Luli, tried to teach them to play:

> These youngsters had spent so many years in convents where speech was almost forbidden that they stood around the garden in timid groups. . . . Our children did not know how to play—and they could not, after their bleak childhood, learn so easily. (252)

The children's lives changed and were enriched in their new environment:

> They rose early and our neighbors watched them doing their sitting-up exercises in the garden. After breakfast they had reading and writing lessons, games, and sometimes a visit to the museums still open. Several times the young men and women from the Cultural Militia came to show them a moving picture film or read poetry and play music. We taught them to sing

> songs, too, and at night after dinner they used to sing very sweetly the folk-songs of Spain. (253)

The children thrived in their new mode of life:

> In a few weeks an enormous change came over our children. They grew almost strong, tanned with the sun. They had been illiterate when they came—now most of them were reading children's gay-colored books. There were happy for the first time in their lives. (253)

As the military situation worsened, de la Mora becomes responsib for the evacuation of 650 children to Alicante, which at that time had bee hardly touched by the war. She finds food, shelter, clothing, and care f them and settles them in children's colonies (262-65). She wrangles foo from farmers, hires cooks, orders beds and sheets, hires teachers, buy books, etc. (265).

In addition to the children's colonies in Spain, which provide care for orphans, children of soldiers at the front, the homeless, ar children of parents who wished to send them to a safer place, paren were also given the option of evacuating their children to the safe and security of foreign countries. As mentioned previously, de la Mo sent her foster daughter to Russia in December, 1936 (277). Approx mately 2000 Spanish children were evacuated to Russia (de la Mo 348), while thousands more were sent to France, England, and Be gium. Many of these children returned to Spain after the war; ma did not. Although physically safe in their new locations and well treat by and large, they suffered pangs of loneliness, of nostalgia for th homeland, of worry for the safety of their loved ones. The young ones, under the age of five, tended to be acculturated and assimilat into their new surroundings; they learned the new language and tend to forget their native tongue. The older ones, ages ten to twel frequently struggled to retain their original identity. Luis de Castresan sent as a child to Belgium, recalls:

> Porque mientras los adultos combatían en España por aquello que les separaba, los niños evacuados al extranjero lucharon infantil y tenazmente tratando de mantener vivo e intacto todo aquello que les unía: sus raíces comunes, su pasado casi idéntido, el idioma y el recuerdo de sus casas, de sus pueblos, de su patria. (*Introducción*)

Santi, the fictionalized narrator of Castresana's "novela testimonial," struggles to maintain his identity. He prefers to be sent to an orphanage/boarding school ("Fleury"), rather than to run the risk of being assimilated into the lives of a wealthy, childless Belgian couple who would have gladly become his surrogate mother and father and who would have given him every material comfort and benefit:

> Santi sintió la necesidad, la desesperada necesidad de definirse y de subrayar su identidad individual. De algún modo él relacionaba aquello con la boina. . . . Y entonces supo que él era un árbol y que nada ni nadie le despojaría de sus raíces. (93)

At "Fleury" he organizes the two-to-three dozen Spanish children in soccer teams; he urges them to continue to use Spanish even though the language of the school is French; he urges them to maintain their culture. Near the end of the war, he muses:

> Y pensó que mientras los adultos habían ensangrentado las tierras de España por lo que les separaba, él y los demás chicos en el "Fleury", habían ganado su pequeña guerra en el extranjero gracias a la unión que les proporcionaban las únicas armas de que disponían: los recuerdos de sus casas, la añoranza de España y sus raíces y su pasado y su idioma, que a todos englobaban, a todos hacían iguales y a todos identificaban. Porque a los españoles, . . . lo mismo a los hombres que a los niños, en realidad son más y más fuertes y más poderosas y más verdaderas las cosas que les unen que las cosas que les separan. Esta era una realidad que él había aprendido y había sentido, concreta y tangible como un objeto físico, durante la larga ausencia. (241-42)

Children and Their Normal Biological and Psychological Development

We have thus far examined a variety of elements affecting the lives of children in the Spanish Civil War—the violence and horror of the war, the real and constant danger and fear of dealth, children's play, the shortages of food and fuel and the resultant hunger and cold, children's resourceful-

ness in helping their families cope, and their schooling. One element remains to be examined: the normal process and complication of "coming of age" in the circumstances of civil war.

In the midst of bombs, blood, fear, death, hunger, and uncertainly, the normal biological processes and emotional changes announcing the transition from childhood to adoloscence somehow did occur, and on schedule. The family doctor comes to see Pituca, who is suffering from frostbite, shortly after her fourteenth birthday. Pituca describes the situation thus:

> Don Manuel dijo que me faltaban vitaminas... Me encontró delgada, pero nada más; me dio risa oírle, que no se explicaba cómo podía estar tan desarrollada con el hambre que estamos pasando. (Díaz Garrido 111)

Her first interest in boys appeared in 1937 when she was but thirteen. She and her friends, both boys and girls, go to the movies:

> Casi ocupábamos dos filas de butacas. A mi lado derecho se sentó Jaime, al otro Celia. ¡Ay, lo que nos hemos reído! Pero a mí me hubiese gustado más estar sola con chicas, pues no sé por qué, en el cine, a oscuras, me daba vergüenza que Jaime me mirara y mucho más que me hablara bajito, casi al oído. (Díaz Garrido 75)

As a symbol of her newly achieved womanhood, Pituca's first pair of stockings were her prize:

> ¡Emoción y más emoción!... Me regala la tía Laura unas medias usadas. Son de hilo color beige, tan finas que parecen de seda. Me las he probado veinte veces con los zapatos para pasear por el pasillo; ahora no quiero ligas redondas, que me molestan; mamá dice que me hará un liguero... ¿No es divertido?, aunque la palabreja es horrible. (Díaz Garrido 116)

Sensitive twelve-year-old Fernando in *Los días de odio* feels the first pangs of puberty when he becomes fascinated by the eyes of Jacinta. Gradually, fearfully, he builds a relationship of infatuation or "first love" with her:

> Cuando digo el mundo de Jacinta me refiero

> solamente a todo lo que caía dentro del gozo y la presencia con que me herían sus ojos al mirarnos, incluso desde el recuerdo. Aquel estado inefable, intransferible y secretamente mío, como un sabor a sed jubilosa y llevadera, que te abría a una oscura esperanza, a una borrosa expectación de algo que tú intuías definitivo y suficiente. (153-54)

Their relationship, however, is difficult because of the difference in their social status and the restrictions caused by the War. Her untimely illness and death thwart what might have been a positive, normal step in his personal social development and self-esteem.

Thirteen-year-old Santi is immediately attracted to fourteen-year-old Montserrat, a new arrival at "Fleury" from a new expedition from Spain.

> . . . Montserrat era una muchacha bastante alta, guapa y de buenos modales, y aunque solo tenía catorce años parecía una verdadera señorita. No era como Aurelia, que tenía once años y se veía que era una niña, casi como un compañero más, sino que Montserrat era distinta; tenía un no sé qué de grato y de femenino en el modo de dar la mano y en su sonrisa y en su forma de hablar. (Castresana 190)

He goes on:

> Ella le sonrió otra vez y le miró a los ojos, pero con una cierta expresión de timidez. . . . Santi también se halló un poco turbado, sin saber exactamente por qué. (190)

Nevertheless, children twelve or older—especially male children—faced the feeling of marginalization, and they frequently questioned their self-worth. They found themselves in the awkward limbo of being too young to take up arms and to go to the front yet too old to be totally dependent. They were neither children nor men. Their burning desire was "to serve." While in Brussels while the war was nearing its conclusion, now fourteen-year-old Santi corresponds with Vicente Moreu Picó, of the same age, his pen-pal from Valencia. Vicente enthusiastically writes to Santi of his desire to become a *miliciano* and to get to the front soon before the war ended (Castresana 130).

Alfonso Albalá formed part of the group of youngsters who were too

young to go to war. His Civil War trilogy, *Mi guerra civil*, portrays the search for identity of those of the "rear guard," of those who desperately wished to contribute to the outcome of the war and thus be "men"—but who could not because of the accident of the date of their birth. Twelve-year-old Fernando, in reality Albalá himself, serves as the narrative voice of the trilogy and becomes the collective representative of the rear guard, the voice of those who remained behind, of those who were too young to serve, of those who could not contribute to either side with their blood. To go to the front when he was old enough was his plan, but the war ended before he was old enough to serve. He sees himself as unworthy of love because he has been unable to make the ultimate sacrifices demanded of men. He laments: "¿Qué hemos hecho nosotros por nuestra España?" (*Días de odio* 190). He deeply regrets having been a mere bystander:

> . . . Uno había vivido aquella etapa heroica como testigo sólo del coraje de los demás, aguardando siempre a madurar para echarte al hombro un arma, con alguna canción de guerra entre los labios, y hacer frente al miedo, en la línea de fuego. (*Días de odio* 227-28)

He further states:

> Me daba envidia del clima de epopeya que vivían los demás, los que tenían un sentido en la vida: hacer la guerra o simplemente vivir tan sólo para el triunfo que todos esperaban con una seguridad increíble y absoluta. Nosotros estábamos al margen de aquello. . . . (*Días de odio* 229)

How did Spanish children bring closure to their Civil War? For many, the response came only years later when, through the filter of the prisms of their own circumstances during and subsequent to the war, they write of their childhood experiences either in fictional or non-fictional forms. For José Antonio Pérez, his father's last words uttered just before the latter's execution by a firing squad served José as the beacon for his own future and that of Spain. José was but five at the time of his father's death:

> He [José's father] said that he was going to die for a better Spain, for a social justice that would be brought about within a framework of order. He said that he was dying not only for us [his family] but also for the sons of people like his guards. And because this

> was the case, he enjoined us never to manifest a spirit of vengeance, never to want to avenge his death, because to do so would be to divide Spain into two opposing camps yet again, and therefore to perpetuate all the ills which the country had been suffering from. They believe that they are right, and I believe that I am right. It would be tragic if Spain were to be divided again. (Fraser 477)

For Fernando/Albalá, his epiphany concerning the war and life is summed up in one sentence: "La vida es ágape o guerra" (*El fuego* 15), and in his adult years Albalá rejects "guerra" and selects "ágape," the brotherly, unselfish, or spiritual, love of one Christian for another.

But Andrés, Santi's friend from "Fleury," sums it up as only a child can—simply and honestly:

> Porque Andrés sabía ya, por propia experiencia, que la vida no la habían hecho los niños, sino los hombres, y la habían hecho a su medida. Los hombres eran hombres y había que respetarles y obedecerles, pero Andrés pensaba que casi todos los adultos eran vanidosos como diosecillos y creían estar siempre al cabo de la calle cuando en realidad sabían muy poco sobre un montón de cosas que los niños comprendían muy bien. (Castresana 221)

Santi shares Andrés' skepticism with respect to adults:

> Había pasado tanto tiempo desde que las personas mayores fueron niños, y comprendían tan poco y tan mal la simple realidad de las cosas, que a veces le parecía a Santi que había muchísimos hombres que nunca habían sido niños. (Castresana 221)

And as he returns to Spain at the conclusion of the war, he is hopeful that all will be as it should be:

> . . . las familias unidas y no separadas, los españoles en paz con los españoles, . . . los chicos españoles estudiando, jugando y creciendo sobre su propia tierra. (221-22)

But the never-ending cycle of war continues. As Santi and his friends prepare to return to Spain, they witness in Brussels the beginnings of another war, the preparations for WWII:

> Entre las uniformes, los gritos, los aplausos de la muchedumbre, los cascos de los caballos y los himnos patrióticos . . . Santi vio a Monsieur Thibaud, su profesor de matemáticas, vestido de oficial, desfilando al mando de una compañía. Javier y Santi se miraron y creyeron oír nuevamente las canciones que desde camiones los milicianos que iban al frente y los gritos de saludo y los aplausos que le dirigía el público desde las aceras. Sabían que después de los himnos y de las marchas militares vendrían los bombardeos. . . . Vendrían también los refugios, los racionamientos y las listas con los nombres de los padres, los hermanos, los parientes y àmigos caídos en el campo de batalla. (225-26)

When he sees the preparations for war in beautiful Paris, Santi asks himself:

> ¿No aprederán nunca los hombres?, no dejarán nunca de odiarse y destruir casas y ciudades y de matarse unos a otros?, no dejarán nunca de asustar a los niños y de hacer sufrir a las mujeres? (237)

As Tuttle aptly summarizes:

> It is not cynical but realistic to doubt history's power. Children have never asked to be born into situations of war, and yet repeatedly have been, and they have suffered whether in the war zone or on the homefront. And it is because of adults' repeated mistakes that children, who understand war least, have been deeply marked by it. For their sake, as well as our own, we must strive for enlightenment in reversing history. (263)

The ultimate question to be asked is this: Will adults ever learn to heed

children's honest, simple, insightful, and sincere voices?

Notes

[1] Garbarino, Dubrow, Kostelny, and Pardo explore the growth and development of children when they live in chronic danger. They affirm that in Western cultures, childhood is considered a time of special protection and of safety:

> Initially, the child inside its mother's womb is safe from the elements. Once born, the child is kept safe, fed, sheltered, and nurtured so that it can grow and develop, fulfilling its potential. In the first year of life, children become attached to parents, and the safety of these attachments permits children to explore the environment with confidence. . . . As children pass through the first decade of life, they should be able to broaden this safe haven to include the home, the neighborhood, and the school. When children feel safe at home, they are ready to grow. When safe in the neighborhood, children are ready to play and explore and form relationships with other children. When they feel safe at school, they are ready to learn and to become confident and competent adults. (1)

[2] Lowenthal says of memory:

> . . . We continually reshape memory, rewrite history, refashion relics. . . . To revise what actually happened, as distinct from our ideas and its traces, is impossible, yet ardently desired. Three main motives impel would-be time travellers to tamper with history: to improve the past itself or the lot of those who live in it; to better present circumstances by changing what has led up to them; and to ensure the stability of the present by altering (or protecting) the past against interference by others. (26)

Mangini echoes a similar sentiment:

> Recounting memories is a slippery task. Questions of truth versus fiction are based on the fickle nature of memory, the passage of time, the need for self-justification, self-compassion, and self-aggrandizement, and so on. These issues have been analyzed and dissected repeatedly in relation to the

> so-called autobiographical genre, a notion on which few critics and historians agree. (53)

[3] See Tuttle for a general discussion of children's war games, improvised play weapons, and mock uniforms (134-147).

[4] "Plim" is the child's badly pronounced version of "Prim." Galdós juxtaposes *Majito's* childish inability to pronounce Prim's name with the child's seriously playing the adult role of the war hero. Juan Prim y Prats (1814-1870), a Spanish general and politician, distinguished himself in the Marrocan War (1859). He participated in the Spanish Revolution of 1868 and as President of the Consejo, he was instrumental in establishing a constitutional monarchy in Spain. He was assasinated in 1870, the day the new King, Amadeo, embarked for Spain (*Pequeño Larousse ilustrado*).

[5] Tolley, in his study, *Children and War: Political Socialization to International Conflict*, concludes that children's attitudes toward war crystallize by age seven. By age fifteen, adolescents appear to have firm ideas about war and peace (6).

[6] The influence of the family is considerable on choice of political party just as it is on the choice of church denomination: that is, party choice generally results from family loyalty and identification (Hess and Torney 213). Further, the political attitude of children is an emotional tie which "apparently grows from complex psychological and social needs and is exceedingly resistent to change or argument. It is a powerful emotional bond that is particularly important in time of national emergengy" (Hess and Torney 213).

[7] Hess and Torney point out that no differences exist between boys and girls with respect to their basic attachment, loyalty, and support of their country:

> In general, the differences between males and females are consistent with sex differences reported by other investigators. Girls tend to be more oriented toward persons, more expressive and trustful in their attitudes toward the system, its representatives, and institutions. Boys tend to be more task-oriented and are more willing to accept and see benefit in conflict and disagreement. (222)

[8] Hess and Torney underline the importance of the flag as a symbol of allegiance and patriotism in children who seek group affiliation. They affirm: "National symbols such as the flag . . . are crucial points of focus for attachment. Since the child's initial identification with his country is supported by so little specific information, symbols provide tangible objects toward which feelings of attachment can be socialized" (28).

[9] Juan Negrín López (1889-1956), a socialist doctor and politician, assumed the presidency of the Spanish Republic in May 1937, and he served in that capacity through the end of the Spanish Civil War (Thomas 80-84).

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