

ABSTRACT

Literary Critique of Female Identity under Spain's Francoist Dictatorship in *Nada* and *Entre visillos*

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Two works by female authors during the Francoist dictatorship in Spain—*Nada*, published in 1945, and *Entre visillos*, published in 1957—use double discourse to critique society through their expression of female identity. Carmen Laforet and Carmen Martín Gaité worked past censorship to articulate an alternate vision of female identity formation to the policies of the Francoist dictatorship which articulated a limited role for women. The framework offered by these books' historical and literary contexts allows for a detailed analysis of each work individually. Andrea, the main character of *Nada*, discovers her identity during a tumultuous year with her family in Barcelona, its description shaped by the *tremendismo* literary movement. *Entre visillos*, published in the next decade, uses the technique of *neorealismo* to portray the lives of various young women and men in a provincial capital, with the character Natalia playing a critical role. As each book is an example of the *bildungsroman*, identity formation is paramount. *Nada* and *Entre visillos*, through their different time periods and literary styles, present their female characters' struggles to develop their own identities in a repressive society.

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LITERARY CRITIQUE OF FEMALE IDENTITY UNDER SPAIN'S FRANCOIST
DICTATORSHIP IN *NADA* AND *ENTRE VISILLOS*

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: Historical and Literary Contexts

Spain's twentieth century bears the indelible mark of Francisco Franco's dictatorship and his government's ideology. In the aftermath of the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) and at the birth of the dictatorship, the regime limited Spain's national discourse to prevent criticism. The only way to express social critiques was through a double discourse. Authors who remained in the country, such as Carmen Laforet (1921–2004) and Carmen Martín Gaité (1924–2000), framed their societal critiques in such a way that the regime would not see them as such. The female ideals implied by their narratives are contrary to the ideals the regime imposed on women through its Sección Femenina. Thus, the appropriate way to look for the true themes of *Nada* (1942) by Laforet and *Entre visillos* (1956) by Martín Gaité is to analyze them as works of double discourse as described by Mikhail Bakhtin. Despite the restrictions imposed by censorship, Laforet, in a tremendismo style of the 1940s, and Martín Gaité, using the neorealismo of the 1950s, articulated their vision of what a woman ought to be and how she ought to find her identity in opposition to the ideals of womanhood promulgated under the dictatorship.

Historical Context

The Spanish Civil War and Its Effect on Women's Rights

The Spanish Civil War marked the culmination of a rift between progressive elements and traditional centers of power, particularly the aristocracy and the church. This conflict affected every area of life. From 1931–36, Spain was fully under the control of the Second Republic, but between 1936 and 1939 Spaniards fought a bloody civil war either on the side of the Republicans, who supported the changes made by the Second Republic, or the Nationalists, who desired a return to traditional hierarchies. Citizens of the lower classes typically supported the Republican government, while the Nationalists had support from elites, the Catholic Church, and the military. The Nationalists saw the Republic as an atheistic Communist government and envisioned themselves as reinstating the true national identity of Spain.

During the Second Republic, women gained the right to vote and to divorce as the power of the Church diminished. Various political groups for women and the educational system encouraged their autonomy. In the field of education, the Republic instituted co-education and questioned the obligation to study religion (Noval Clemente 27). For example, the Institución Libre de Enseñanza created an environment promoting the transformation of the role of Spanish women in society (Noval Clemente 28). The Institución educated women in principles such as friendship between the sexes and in their potential for independence (Noval Clemente 28). These changes were most notable in the places where the Republic was most powerful, particularly in Madrid and other large cities.

La Sección Femenina. After the Civil War, the Francoist regime would characterize the Second Republic as one of regression for women which threatened their ‘natural identity’ as homemakers. This mentality resulted in the regime’s efforts to elevate ‘funciones femeninas’ in the private sphere, restricting women’s access to the public sphere and denying the impulse for individual identity (del Rincón 64). The freedoms and rights gained during the second republic faded into the past as the regime claimed that no political organization had done anything profitable for women prior to the women’s wing of Franco’s Falange party, the Sección Femenina (Noval Clemente 26). The Falange formed as a response to the increasingly liberal policies of Spanish society in the 1930s. Led by José Antonio Primo de Rivera, the son of Spain’s dictator from 1923–30, this group gained popularity in part by positioning itself as against the equality of women and men. Primo de Rivera claimed in one speech as follows: “la mujer...acepta una vida de sumisión, de servicio, de ofrenda abnegada a una tarea,” and claimed that the Falange would elevate women’s place in society by not requiring them to aspire to “funciones varoniles” (qtd. in Noval Clemente 34). A year after the Falange’s founding, the Sección Femenina formed as a way for women to have a place in the movement. José Antonio Primo de Rivera established his sister, Pilar, as the leader of the organization (Noval Clemente 37).

After the Civil War, the Sección Femenina gained political power. The Franco regime’s policies towards women and the Sección Femenina’s ideology contrasted sharply with the societal critiques in women’s writing of this time. After the Civil War, Franco’s regime attempted to ‘purify’ Spain and erase parts of history from before the

war which did not align with its narrative. To validate its power, Franco's regime appropriated symbols from Spain's tradition.



Figure 1: Falangist Flag

For example, The flag of the party featured the “yugo y flechas,” a symbol of the unity created by the marriage of the ‘Reyes Católicos,’ Fernando II of Aragón and Isabel I of Castilla in 1469. The appropriation of this symbol reflected the Francoist goal of returning Spain to the idealized image of ‘Hispanidad’ of the past. According to the new government, the Republic had attempted to destroy Spain’s immortal soul, and it now had to undergo a process of purification (Richards 9). As part of this mission, the regime characterized the reforms instituted by the Second Republic as contrary to the nature of Spaniards and the natural place of women. The education of boys and girls became, preparing women for a future in the home and men for a life in the public sphere (Noval Clemente 63). Laws of the time reflected this concept of separate spheres. For example, the regime returned to the 1889 Civil Code, meaning that married women became minors in the eyes of the law (Graham 184).



Figure 2: Sección Femenina “Día de la madre” Poster (1945)

While claiming that women were inherently inferior to their male counterparts, Francoist ideology blamed women for the failing to maintain ‘moral vigilance’ over the men of Spain in the time of the Republic (Richards 52–53). As Michael Richards states, “The issues of ‘moral re-education’ and purification were, therefore, focused on the image and behaviour of women. Females were potentially the carriers of purity, but also associated with possible impurity.” (53). The regime, and the Sección Femenina in particular, promoted a specific vision of who a Spanish woman was to be.

This task included the creation of models for ideal femininity, fashioned out of the historical images of St. Teresa of Ávila and Isabel I. By using these women as models, modifying their histories to fit neatly into a passive, self-sacrificing construction of womanhood, the Sección Femenina told women that their task was in the home, raising children who would grow up to be loyal to Francoist Spain. In the home they could, as Pilar stated, “ayudar al marido en sus tareas y poder entenderlo mejor y hacerle la vida, dentro de la casa más atrayente e interesante” (qtd. in del Rincón 75). The Sección

Femenina oriented its efforts towards controlling the ideology taught in the home, as a method of influencing the private sphere. Pilar also claimed that a properly educated woman would be able to intervene directly in the cultural formation of her children (del Rincón 75). This vision is articulated in the above poster, which in addressing these women says, “Sois vosotras a las que corresponde la misión extraordinaria y sagrada de forjar la grandeza de España” [The extraordinary and sacred mission of forming Spain’s greatness belongs to you]. This rhetoric makes it clear that it is a woman’s duty to support the goals of the Francoist regime not only through her own efforts but through her unique role as mother. Through providing educational centers for women, the Sección Femenina enforced its mission statement, which affirmed the following: “La mujer... ha de estar al corriente de los problemas y necesidades de España, no para discutirlos, sino para poder infundirlos en el corazón de sus hijos y hacer de ese modo que un verdadero patriotismo informe toda la vida española” [The woman... must be up to date on the problems and needs of Spain, not to discuss them but rather to fill their children’s hearts with them, and cause true patriotism to inform all of Spanish life] (qtd. in del Rincón, 75). Spain’s women represented a path to ‘true patriotism,’ according to the Sección Femenina, if they were pious, self-sacrificing, and subservient to men.

Censorship in the Post-war Era

Another way in which the regime dictated what was acceptable for the people of Spain in general and women in particular was through its restrictions on the media, which had to pass censorship restrictions. The press was completely controlled by the state, meaning that the regime hid its crimes and many of them remain lost to history (Richards 10). The dictatorship embraced economic ‘autarky,’ an extreme form of isolationism, and

this policy extended to cultural content available in Spain (Graham 186). After the Civil War, “Spain’s borders were effectively sealed and libraries were purged; book-burnings in the streets were a common sight” (Altisent 62). The regime suppressed any criticism of its actions and support for ideals that conflicted with its vision for Spain. Censors also searched for any criticism of the Catholic Church, which had power over the forms of discourse permitted by the regime and was supposed to maintain public morality. Any association with the Republic “was not only to be confessed but recanted, suppressed and negated at a personal level” (Richards 7). Artists, novelists, and directors who wanted to critique the dictatorship had a few options: silence, exile, or hidden criticism.

Censorship also prohibited any discussion of the Civil War which did not glorify the “Alzamiento” and align with the regime’s version of Spanish history. Therefore, historiography of the war was extremely limited (Altisent 77). Many people were executed in the wake of the war; a conservative estimate is 200,000 individuals. Any historian who recorded these executions as actions of the regime could have become the victim of them (Richards 11). The effect of this censorship was to create a sealed environment, a historiological vacuum: “The monopolisation of public memory and the public voice by the victors occupied the space enclosed within [Spain’s] barriers” (Richards 4). Rather than directly discuss the Civil War, authors discussed its effect on the Spanish people.

Double Discourse. These conditions necessitated the emergence of a form of art which would indirectly explain and critique the dictatorship. Some authors used parody, allegory, and myth (Altisent 78). Another important technique was that of double discourse. Mikhail Bakhtin, the Russian theorist and philosopher, defines double-voiced discourse as a method of expressing an opinion while adjusting the methods used to portray it so it does not violate societal constraints. According to Bakhtin, “Direct authorial discourse is not possible in every literary period,” and “when there is no adequate form for an unmediated expression of an author’s intentions, it becomes necessary to refract them through another’s speech” (Bakhtin 292). Within a system such as that in Spain during the Francoist dictatorship, double discourse is the only discourse at variance with the dominant voice of the dictatorship. It passes censorship restrictions because on the surface it appears to align with prevailing ideology, yet underneath the surface, it advocates for something which directly opposes the dominant ideology. Much of Spanish literature from this time uses double discourse to express views which would not have passed censorship had their authors expressed them more clearly.

*Contextual Analysis of *Nada* and *Entre visillos**

The works of Carmen Laforet and Carmen Martín Gaité offer prime examples of Bakhtin’s double discourse, a lens through which to view the authors’ implicit critique of Francoist society. In *Nada* and *Entre visillos*, the authors apply double discourse to the genre of the *bildungsroman*, the novel of formation or “coming of age.” For the female protagonists of these novels, Andrea and Natalia, the formation which they undergo conflicts with the vision of femininity espoused by the Franco regime. When Andrea and Natalia demonstrate their “capacity for running their own lives and their willingness to

step out of line whenever they feel they need to do so if they are to fulfill themselves as individuals,” they are demonstrating a feminist theory of identity in a regime which defined women by their relation to the family and the nation (Altisent 10). Kate Offen distinguishes between relational and individualist models of feminism, saying that relational feminist arguments promote the rights of women within their domestic sphere as women while individualist arguments promote women’s rights in terms of their autonomy and self-expression. She says, “the individualist feminist tradition of argumentation emphasized more abstract concepts of individual human rights and celebrated the quest for personal independence (or autonomy) in all aspects of life, while downplaying, deprecating, or dismissing as insignificant all socially defined roles and minimizing discussion of sex-linked qualities or contributions” (Offen 136). The identity formation of Andrea and Natalia aligns with the individualist feminist model of autonomy.

Both *Nada* and *Entre visillos* are especially important as works of their time periods because both won literary acclaim in the form of the Premio Nadal. *Nada* was the first recipient of this literary prize, in 1944. Not only did both novels pass censorship restrictions, they received the oldest literary award in Spain in spite of their subtle critiques of society. In light of their preeminence, each novel is important as representative of its time period. *Nada* implicitly references the division of the Civil War on the scale of the family. In *Entre visillos*, Natalia’s diary explicitly mocks the young women around her who conform to societal expectations. Both novels depict young women coming to terms with the difference between who they are and who the people around them expect them to be. These characters are inextricably linked to their historical

context as it appears in the ideals and literature of the Sección Femenina and the Franco regime. The double discourse described by Bakhtin takes the form of identity formation. As Andrea and Natalia gain agency over their own identities, they demonstrate that the expectations society holds for them are problematic.

The novels, separated by ten years of history, have differences which are the result of their historical contexts. When *Nada* was published in the 1940s, Spain was suffering immensely from the consequences of Spain's economic autarky. Franco's goal of economic self-sufficiency resulted in mass starvation. At least 200,000 people died as a result of the policies pursued by the dictatorship (Richards 11). The literary techniques of the immediate post-war era in the 1940s reflect this suffering despite their inability to portray it directly because portraying Franco's regime as anything less than the savior of the Spanish people was not permitted within the restrictions of censorship. In the 1940s, the government denied those who were suffering any kind of collective identity beyond that of the 'Patria' (Richards 35). Suffering persisted in the absence of collective identity and in the silence of history.

During the 1950s, suffering did not match the intensity of the immediate post-war years. Instead, history would reflect on this time as the *años grises* (grey years)—a time during which the regime continued to control culture and limit the vibrance of expression through censorship but food shortages and political executions were fewer. As a backdrop for *Entre visillos*, this decade is important because even without the poverty and starvation which were present during the 1940s, the possibilities for women in society were still limited, as the regime forced all females to define themselves through its lens.

Differences in Literary Style

Nada and *Entre visillos* use the tools of the literary styles which were typical of their time periods, *tremendismo* and *neorealismo*. Just after the Spanish Civil War, in the 1940s, the style of *tremendismo* dominated novelist production and provided unique opportunities for social criticism. *Tremendismo* marks a return to the *naturalismo* of the nineteenth century, which focused on portraying both the beautiful and ugly parts of life. By returning back to styles of the nineteenth century, post-war novels separated themselves from the experimental literature popular in the early twentieth century and avoided association with the Second Republic. *Tremendismo* is “an aesthetic of violence based on an unmediated description of brutality,” a form of social realism which powerfully described the systemic class inequality and division of the post-war era (Altisent 16). The violence of *tremendismo* is purposeless and gratuitous, providing an outlet for the portrayal of real-world violence perpetrated by the regime.

Published in 1945, *Nada* is a product of this literary tradition. Laforet depicts a protagonist who moves to Barcelona for her education and to live with her father’s family, which she remembers as well-off, only to find that its members’ lives are falling apart. The novel never mentions The Civil War as the source of the conflict, but the double discourse present in this text suggests that it clearly is. Following the tradition of *tremendismo*, *Nada* emphasizes grotesque and violent imagery and paints a picture of a city, Barcelona, as well as a family which remains torn apart by the war. In *Nada*, the motif of violence takes on “historical, social, existential, and psychoanalytical” dimensions (Altisent 4). Andrea forms a coherent identity in the face of the violence of her historical and family situation. When she leaves Barcelona at the end of the novel,

she escapes her shockingly realistic circumstances and the social impositions of her dysfunctional family, having formed an identity which aligns with Offen's model of individualistic feminism rather than which the Sección Femenina's prescriptions for women.

Entre visillos by Carmen Martín Gaité also obliquely critiques Francoist society using the technique of double discourse. Published twelve years after *Nada* in 1957, it is the product of a different literary style, that of neorealismo. Also called objectivism or social realism, this style is a form of realism which harkens back to literary techniques of the nineteenth century and appears to depict the mundane aspects of life; neorealistic novels are often described as 'slice of life' novels. They removed the intrusive narrative voice to present events directly and apparently without comment, as if they were recorded by a camera or tape recorder. This form of social literature offers a sense of authenticity ideal for social criticism. As Altisent summarizes, "Social literature under Franco consisted...of works of political protest, necessarily covert but nevertheless subversive and critical in intent" (Altisent 62). Often, works using this technique presented cases of socioeconomic injustice. In the case of *Entre visillos*, Martín Gaité also expresses the injustices suffered by women. On the surface, the novel simply appears to document the lives of young women and men in a provincial capital of Spain in the 1950s, loosely based on the author's youth in Salamanca. The censors who read the novel before its publication called it "A provincial story about a group of girls, their studies and their love lives" (qtd. in O'Byrne 38). However, when read through the lens of double discourse, the novel represents much more. The novel's plot reveals itself through a fragmented series of diary entries and narrations from various characters. The centerpiece of this

story is the character Natalia, whose narrative also reflects that of the bildungsroman, as she forms her identity through her experiences growing up as a motherless sixteen-year-old.

Double Discourse and Female Agency

The Sección Femenina's ideals for women as homemakers and protectors of the future of 'Hispanidad' oppose the agency which Andrea and Natalia gain in their stories. Both characters are coming of age in a time in which society offers a clear roadmap for who women are supposed to be. Neither of them is able or willing to conform to these expectations. Instead, they form their own identities through their own agency as they come of age. This individualistic model of identity formation as opposed to a relational one is fundamental to the double discourse of both novels. The only people who can define Andrea and Natalia are they themselves, and this sense of agency makes them vehicles for criticizing the ideals of the Francoist dictatorship. While the censors who read these texts were blind to the criticisms of the State and the dominance of the Church in Spanish life, critiques of these institutions appear throughout the texts. Through the analysis of these novels, readers can see the emergence of two sets of ideals for women in twentieth-century Spain. Although the ideals of society encroach upon the characters' agency, they surpass them. These young women create a new set of ideals based on their own freedom and act based upon it.

CHAPTER TWO

Carmen Laforet's *Nada*: Agency as an Escape Route from Censorship

Nada by Carmen Laforet is in many ways a traditional coming-of-age novel, telling the story of a young woman at the edge of adulthood in Barcelona. However, it was published in 1945, just six years after the beginning of the Francoist dictatorship. As a result, Laforet wrote it in dialogue with the expectations the regime placed upon young women. Her dialogue could not be overt; she could not say outright that the Francoist vision of womanhood was incorrect. Any open critique of the regime or its values would not have passed censorship restrictions, much less become the first winner of the Premio Nadal. *Nada* achieved literary acclaim without the dictatorship's noticing plot elements or statements which ran in opposition to Francoist goals. However, double discourse allows the plot to exist on multiple planes. While its dominant discourse aligns with the values of the time period, a counter-discourse reveals that the protagonist, Andrea, is finding her own identity, asserting agency in her life against the social forces opposing her. Laforet uses Andrea's narration, actions and desires to subvert societal expectations of young women in Franco's Spain.

Nada and Post-war Spain

Plot Overview and Context

At the beginning of *Nada*, eighteen-year-old Andrea, an orphan, arrives at the home of her family in Barcelona so that she can attend university. She finds a house in such disrepair that it is unrecognizable as the fine place that it might have been prior to

the Civil War; its residents have fallen into poverty. During the first part of the book, Andrea's aunt Angustias dominates her life, attempting to keep her in the house as much as possible. When Angustias eventually leaves, Andrea explores the environment of Barcelona more, entering various social circles in attempts to find her true identity. Throughout all of these events, the reader witnesses the incredibly violent life of the household on Aribau Street. Andrea's grandmother is a woman who barely knows who the people surrounding her are, her aunt Angustias is haunted and repressed, her uncles Román and Juan clash with each other, and her uncle Juan mercilessly beats his wife Gloria for no apparent reason. Overwhelmed by the violence of the house and failing to find a satisfactory answer for her true selfhood in many of the social circles she enters, Andrea leaves Barcelona to go to Madrid with the family of Ena, her friend from university.

This novel reflects *tremendismo*, “the literary movement introduced and popularized by [Laforet's] contemporary Camilo José Cela that emphasizes the repulsive, the grotesque, and the violent.” (Oxford 133). This literary movement allowed authors of this time period to mark the extreme horrors of post-war Spain by describing extreme elements in their novels. This literary technique provided a way of describing the reality in which these authors lived while making it acceptable through stylization. Laforet uses *tremendismo* in *Nada* to describe the gratuitous violence of the home in which Andrea finds herself, as a proxy for describing the violent topics which she could not mention as a result of censorship restrictions. In this household's violence, the reader vicariously experiences the class struggles of the 1940s in Spain. In particular, the book highlights the breach between the upper classes who primarily supported the Nationalist victors of

the Civil War and the lower classes who primarily supported the previous Republican government and thus received the label of ‘vendidos,’ or ‘defeated,’ by the winners.

Nada’s social critique depends on its post-war context. According to Rodríguez, Laforet centers especially at the beginning of the novel on what he labels “el reconocimiento de la situación de la posguerra española, marcada por la pobreza, el hambre, la violencia y el odio” [the recognition of the Spanish post-war situation, marked by poverty, hunger, violence, and hate] (Rodríguez 26). Starvation was widespread throughout Spain in the 1940s, in both urban areas and the countryside (Richards 139). As stated in the introduction, this massive food shortage resulted from Franco’s policy of economic autarky, which prioritized Spain’s isolation and self-sufficiency above all else. Rural Catalonia was particularly affected because of the already tense relationship between tenant farmers and landlords. Because of the repression of small agrarian producers, they were unable to sustain the nourishment required to work their own fields and provide food for residents of Barcelona (Richards 131). The limitations on food consumption during this time hit the working classes especially hard, as they did not have the means to pay the exorbitant prices on the black market driven by the sudden scarcity. In Barcelona and other cities such as Madrid, deaths from starvation and other diseases were much more common in the 1940s than in any other decade of the twentieth century (Richards 139). During this decade, “basic staples such as wheat and olive oil were sold on the black market at an average of two or three times the official prices” (Cazorla Sánchez 11). However, both foreign observers and the Franco-controlled historical record downplayed this tragedy (Cazorla Sánchez 58).

Historical Content within the Narrative

It is significant that *Nada* is set in Barcelona because this city was also a symbol within Francoist rhetoric of why Spain needed purification. Barcelona needed a ‘biblical punishment;’ when the city fell to the Nationalists in 1939, leaders compared its destruction to the biblical fall of Sodom and Gomorrah (Richards 44). Serrano Suñer, a Francoist leader, stated ‘The city is completely bolshevized. The task of decomposition absolute... In Barcelona the Reds have stifled the Spanish spirit. The people... are morally and politically sick’ (qtd. in Richards 44). According to Francoist ideology, Barcelona was an example of what in Spain needed to be eradicated after the Civil War, which the Nationalists began to do after it was the last city to fall to their control. Historians estimate that in the first nine years after the war at least 1,716 executions occurred there, though concrete figures are impossible to find since records of the regime’s ‘white terror’ were destroyed (Juliá 411–12). This environment amplifies the novel’s double discourse.

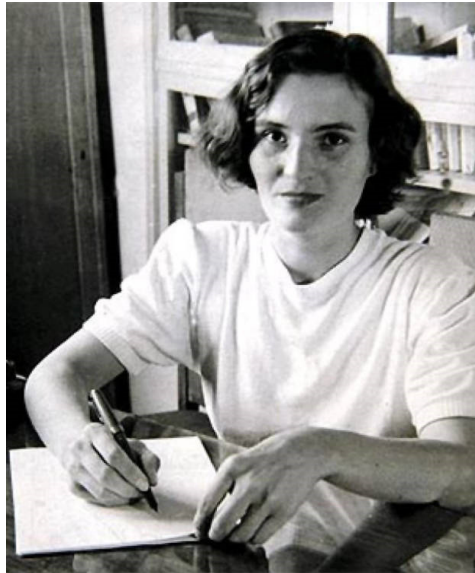


Figure 3: Carmen Laforet

While Laforet has denied that the events of *Nada* are autobiographical, they parallel the events of her life. She grew up in the Canary Islands, but in 1939 left to study in Barcelona while living under the close guard of relatives. In 1942, she moved with a close friend she had made in university to live with her family in Madrid and enrolled in law school (Oxford 133). The novel maintained realism for others who came of age during this time in Spain. For example, Maria Portal, who along with friends read the novel with in secret while enrolled in Catholic school, said the following: “Cuando salió *Nada* y alguna de las niñas mayores consiguió leerla, todo fueron cuchicheos e identificaciones más o menos aproximadas” [When *Nada* came out and one of the older girls managed to read it, everyone whispered and identified more or less with it] (qtd. in Ordóñez 35). Despite the elements of the story that are purposefully grotesque, the novel reveals much truth about what Spain was like in the time period in which the story is set. Laforet could not openly criticize the social structures which created the class conflict and starvation in the story, but the society’s problems are present nonetheless.

The Civil War appears in the story through retrospective stories told by members of Andrea’s family. Gloria tells her of the way that she met Juan and Román during the war, revealing that the brothers were on opposite sides of the fight before Román convinced Juan to join the Nationalists (Laforet 102). This story emphasizes the grotesque simplicity of Gloria’s worldview when she says as follows: “Entonces, en la guerra, siempre estábamos fuera de nuestras casas. ... ¡A mí me parecía tan divertido!” [back then, during the war, we were always out of our houses... I thought it was so much fun!] (Laforet 101, Grossman 34). Although the war only appears in the text in this

minimal way, the violence that characterizes the book as a whole and the grotesque elements in the war's description point to a reading at odds with the surface language. Nothing in *Nada*'s depiction of the war is 'divertido.'

Andrea's Expanding World

Francoist Family Rhetoric and the House on Aribau Street

Francoist rhetoric emphasized the unity of Spain and the primacy of the family. This rhetoric conceived of Spain itself as one family, with all of its members sharing the same values and Franco as the strong patriarch. In the text of one of the regime's laws, they declared "Es consigna rigurosa de nuestra Revolución elevar y fortalecer la familia en su tradición cristiana, sociedad natural, perfecta, y cimiento de la Nación" [It is the strict order of our revolution to elevate and strengthen the family in its Christian tradition, natural society, perfection, and foundation of the nation] (qtd. in Rodríguez 41). In *Nada*, Laforet describes a family characterized by conflict in a way which is the antithesis of these values. The members of the family are in conflict from the moment of Andrea's arrival at the house. One of the first interactions she notes in the novel is a fight between Román and Juan, during the course of which Román even threatens Juan with his gun: "aquí tienes mi pistola" [Here's my pistol] (Laforet 85, Grossman 18). The two brothers are overcome by their violent anger for each other. The only way in which this conflict is somewhat resolved is with the deflection of Juan's anger onto Gloria (Laforet 86). This bleak portrayal of the Spanish family completely undercuts the regime's rhetoric, providing a subtle counter-discourse.

This element of the dysfunctional family is the area in which Laforet incorporates many elements of tremendismo. Andrea describes the house at night as a cacophony of violent sounds:

“La casa se quedó llena de ecos, gruñendo como un animal viejo. El perro, detrás de la puerta de la criada, empezó a ulular, a gemir y a su voz se mezcló otro grito de Gloria, y al llanto de ella que siguió, otro llanto más lejano del niño. Luego este lloro del niño fue el que predominó, el que llenó todos los rincones de la casa ya apaciguada” [The house, growling like an old animal, was filled with echoes. The dog, behind the maid's door, began to howl, to whimper, and its voice mixed with another of Gloria's screams, and then with her crying, and the more distant crying of the baby. Then the child's weeping became the dominant sound, the one that filled all the corners of the house] (Laforet 142, Grossman 16).

Laforet's images in this section of the text recreate in microcosm the violence of the time period through dysfunction of Andrea's family. The violence infects the very space they inhabit. As stated in the introduction, the Francoist understanding of the home was as a space for women to cultivate the next generation and create a new Spain. Here, it is marked by instability and conflict. The screams that echo through the house in *Nada* echo through all of Spain, declaring the Nationalist narrative of Spain's future as false.

The city of Barcelona is a character in itself, and contrasts with the violent imagery of the household as a more positive force in Andrea's life. From her arrival there, she is fascinated by the light and color of the city, which has for her a sensation which she labels “un gran encanto, ya que envolvía todas mis impresiones en la maravilla de haber llegado por fin a una ciudad grande, adorada en mis ensueños por desconocida”

[all my impressions were enveloped in the wonder of having come, at last, to a big city, adored in my daydreams because it was unknown] (Laforet 71, Grossman 3). Andrea is excited to come to the city, and sees all of it as a potential venue for self-discovery. When describing the house on Aribau Street, in contrast, Andrea describes the dust and decay which characterize every part of it. She says as follows, “Parecía una casa de brujas aquel cuarto de baño. Las paredes tiznadas conservaban la huella de manos ganchudas, de gritos de desesperanza” [that bathroom seemed like a witches' house. The stained walls had traces of hook-shaped hands, of screams of despair] (Laforet 76, Grossman 8). Desperation appears in the house in a sense verging on supernatural, at odds with the virtues of Franco's Catholic Spain.

Leaving the House on Aribau Street

At the beginning of the book, Andrea is trapped in her family's house by her aunt, appropriately named Angustias ('anguish'). It appears that Angustias would agree with the Francoist description of Barcelona, as she says thusly, “La ciudad, hija mía, es un infierno. Y en toda España no hay una ciudad que se parezca más al infierno que Barcelona...” [Cities, my child, are hell. And in all of Spain no city resembles hell more than Barcelona](Laforet 82, Grossman 14). The city which for Andrea is an avenue of potential growth is for Angustias a path towards sinfulness and impurity. Angustias is thus a personification of the rhetoric of the dictatorship, limiting Andrea to her potential to fulfill the archetype of the ideal, pure Spanish woman. Andrea notes that Angustias's words of affection give her a sensation that, as she describes it, “no era natural aquello” [it wasn't natural] (Laforet 87, Grossman 19). Angustias is focused on keeping Andrea in the house, saying to her “Pero te gusta ir sola, hija mía, como si fueras un golfo. Expuesta

a las impertinencias de los hombres. ¿Es que eres una criada, acaso?” [But you like to go alone, my child, as if you were an urchin. Exposed to men's impertinence. Are you by any chance a maid?] (Laforet 109). In this passage, Angustias tells Andrea that she ought to fear the men around her, because they threaten her purity and virginity. Before leaving the house, Angustias expresses to Andrea her fear: “Ya sé que hasta ahora no has hecho nada malo. Pero lo harás en cuanto yo me vaya... ¡Lo harás! ¡Lo harás! Tú no dominarás tu cuerpo y tu alma. Tú no, tú no... Tú no podrás dominarlos.” [so far you haven't done anything bad. But you will as soon as I go... You will! You will! You won't control your body and your soul. You won't, you won't... You won't be able to control them.] (Laforet 146, Grossman 81). In these examples, Angustias tries to exercise control over Andrea, limiting her agency and berating her with exaggerated fears.

Eventually, Angustias's affair with a married man, Don Jerónimo Sans, forces her to leave the family's home and join a convent. Not only does this fact make her criticism of Andrea ironic, her departure permits Andrea to have more freedom. She uses her newfound agency to explore social circles outside of the house. According to Del Mastro, “From this point, Andrea's quest becomes more intense, chaotic, but hopeful while she encounters other sub-circles from the university” (60). Andrea experiences a completely different web of social expectations (Del Mastro 55). This new environment accelerates her identity crisis, but it also allows her to explore new identities and decide which ones offer her the most agency. One way in which Andrea tries to find her own identity in the world is in her relationships to boys from the university. First, she spends time with Gerardo, who she at one point says gestures to her “como si yo fuera un perro” [as if I were a dog] (Laforet 177, Grossman 115). Gerardo also forcibly kisses Andrea, and the

reader learns that this is her first kiss. Andrea compares this moment to when she was told that she had become a woman with the beginning of her menstruation and concludes “Es muy posible que esto tampoco tenga importancia” [It's very possible that this doesn't matter, either] (Laforet 180, Grossman 118). Andrea learns that this moment, which she had previously filled with such importance and thought would be a turning point in her life, is actually something which passes without great impact.

The next social web in which Andrea embeds herself is that of Pons, her friend from university. Pons introduces her to his group of bohemian artist friends. It is clear from their interactions that he expects her to be impressed by them. However, Andrea does not earn the respect from them that she deserves as an agent in the world. In their interaction, Pons's friend Guíxols actually says, “Ahora vamos a merendar si Andrea tiene la bondad de hacernos unos bocadillos con el pan y el jamón que encontrará escondido detrás de la puerta...” [Now we'll have something to eat if Andrea will be good enough to make us some sandwiches with the bread and ham she'll find hidden behind the door] (Laforet 188, Grossman 126). Guíxols's comment reflects that Andrea's value in this particular social interaction is her ability to prepare food for them, rather than anything she might add to their conversation. He, like Angustias, has cast Andrea in a stereotypical role assigned to women. This time, it is that of a housewife, who fixes food and serves men. Andrea does not say precisely why this bothers her in her narration, but it is clear to the reader that this expectation conflicts with a developing sense of agency. There is no reason that she needs to be of service to these men, yet they still demand that she do so simply because she is the female in the group. In this new circle,

Andrea continues to struggle against stereotypical roles assigned to women in Franco's Spain.

The Cinderella Myth and the Failure of Marriage as an Escape Route

Additionally, Andrea feels pressured to follow the social norms of her time period. As previously stated, women's role in Franco's Spain was to be good mothers, to participate in the myth of the perfect Spanish family. The Sección Femenina offered instruction to women of the 1940s on ways to create a home environment that raised children who would be loyal to the Nationalist government. In one interaction with Pons, Andrea expresses that she is not precisely sure what she would like to do after graduation, but that perhaps she would like to teach. In response, Pons says, "¿No te gustaría más casarte?" [Wouldn't you rather get married] (Laforet 215). Pons lays out a path for Andrea that society, with its patriarchal ideal, forces her to consider not only because it offers her something to do after graduation but also because it is her duty as a Spanish woman. While, unlike Gerardo, Pons is civil to Andrea in all of his interactions with her, he maintains gendered expectations of what her life will look like. Again, Andrea's narration does not reveal her thoughts in response to this question, but she does note that she did not answer him, and it appears that his question is the end of the conversation (Laforet 215). By leaving the question unanswered and unacknowledged, Laforet invites the reader to consider its implications for Andrea, and by extension for all Spanish women.

Pons will participate in another experience by which Andrea learns about the kind of agency she requires in her life. When he calls to invite her to a dance at his house, she is at first excited, saying that "El sentimiento de ser esperada y querida me hacía

despertar mil instintos de mujer; una emoción como de triunfo, un deseo de ser alabada, admirada, de sentirme como la Cenicienta del cuento, princesa por unas horas, después de un largo incógnito” [The feeling of being expected, of being loved, awoke a thousand woman's instincts in me; an emotion like triumph, a desire to be praised, admired, to feel like Cinderella in the fairy tale, a princess for a few hours after a long period of concealment] (Laforet 238, Grossman 110). Andrea references her ‘womanly instincts’ to chase a fairytale ending with the expectation that she will be able to fulfill it and identifies the specific story with which she attempts to identify as that of Cinderella, which she heard many times as a child.

Andrea hopes to find her own value in a man’s admiration of her. She believes that, like Cinderella, she is capable of transformation in order to fit into the correct social role. Pons’s gaze at her will mean that, as she narrates, “el sentido de la vida para una mujer consiste únicamente en ser descubierta así, mirada de manera que ella misma se sienta irradiante de luz” [the meaning of life for a woman consists solely in being discovered like this, looked at so that she herself feels radiant with light] (Laforet 238–9, Grossman 111). Andrea seems to suggest that she will find the meaning of her life in being objectified. Laforet heightens the impossibility of Andrea’s goal by associating it with a literal fairytale in which she sees herself as playing a role. This narrative parallel is intensified by the class dynamics between Pons and Andrea; Pons comes from a wealthy family and is seemingly well-poised to be the ‘príncipe azul,’ or Prince Charming, that Andrea needs to rescue her from a dull lifestyle.

When Andrea actually attends the party at Pons’s house, she discovers that it is far from what she expected. Just as she did while talking to Angustias before her

departure, she has a revelation while looking at her own appearance in a mirror. This time, she sees herself as a girl in an old dress, contrasting with the finery that clothes the people around her: “Me vi en un espejo blanca y gris, deslucida entre los alegres trajes de verano que me rodeaban. Absolutamente seria entre la animación de todos y me sentí un poco ridícula” [I saw myself in a mirror, white and gray, dowdy amongst the summer dresses all around me. Absolutely serious in the midst of everyone's animation, and I felt ridiculous] (Laforet 241, Grossman 179). This scene is notable because Laforet emphasizes both the class difference between Andrea and those around her and the inadequacy of the vision Andrea imagined for herself at the party with Pons. She and Cinderella have in common their status as young women without wealth at high-class parties, but real life in Franco's Spain does not allow for the transformation that a fairytale does.

After she finds herself completely disengaged from her environment, Andrea leaves the party and wanders the street until happening upon the mother of her friend Ena, an example of someone who is still in a class higher than Andrea's but does not inspire the same false expectations. With this party, Andrea is disabused of the notion that all her problems will be solved with an easy, fairytale-like transformation that allows her to fit neatly into an expected social role. In Bettelheim's analysis of the Cinderella tale, he argues that the tale offers a metaphor for the gaining of agency and fulfillment. He says as follows: “‘Cinderella’ sets forth the steps in personality development required to reach self-fulfillment, and presents them in fairy-tale fashion so that every person can understand what is required of him to become a full human being” (Bettelheim 275). In Andrea's interpretation, however, the story is about the prince rescuing Cinderella from

her depraved environment. After failing to reproduce it in her own life, she learns that her interpretation of the fairytale is not an adequate model for her behavior or that of any young woman.

Hidden Engagement with Francoist Rhetoric in Nada

Andrea's Search for a Future

The Franco regime expected women to submit to marriage as the answer for all of the problems that they faced in the society. This mindset was part of a return to the traditional Catholic view of women and of marriage. The regime promoted the Catholic church's beliefs about marriage, summarized by a Jesuit educator who said as follows, "La dignificación de la mujer no puede hallarse por otro camino que el del matrimonio cristiano, único, indisoluble" [a woman cannot find dignity by any other way than through Christian marriage, one-time and indissoluble] (qtd. in Rodríguez 42).^[11] Earlier in the narrative, when Pons asked Andrea whether she would not much prefer marriage to a future in teaching, he was really asking her whether or not she was willing to fit into the expectations and stereotypes of her society. While censors did not see anything wrong with *Nada*, did not see it as a novel which critiqued the church or the state, the reader can view Andrea's resistance to the prescribed narrative. The story's treatment of her hope that Pons will solve all of her problems reflects a critique of the social order dictated by the Franco regime, based in its conception of itself as a return to the Catholic ideals of Spain. On its own, Pons's statement is an innocent inquiry, a way for Laforet to explore Andrea's future. However, the statement exists in an extratextual conversation with the values of the Francoist dictatorship. Bakhtin refers to a 'hidden polemic' in which another act of speech—in this case, Francoist rhetoric about marriage—"is not

reproduced with a new intention, but shapes the author's speech while remaining outside its boundaries" (295). Laforet's engagement with concurrent discourse about marriage is oblique, but present: it disguises its status as an argument by only revealing one side.

Andrea's search for identity is a creative act. As Rodríguez says thusly, "el desarrollo de la protagonista de *Nada* se despliega... de acuerdo a un proceso de autoconsciencia que facilita en último término la facultad creadora. [the protagonist of *Nada*'s development unfolds... alongside a process of self-knowledge which ultimately facilitates a creative faculty]" (Rodríguez 33). Andrea absorbs the experiences of her time spent in Barcelona, observing things such as Gloria's vanity, her own class difference from her classmates, and her aunt Angustias's self-righteousness and hypocrisy. While she is constructing her own identity, other characters receive the effects of her new identity without absorbing it. Rodríguez argues that modifications in behavior on the part of the other characters cause the reader to see a clearer image of Andrea herself (37). Andrea must define herself by looking at her potential paths forward as exhibited by the people around her.

The social spheres with which Andrea engages can also be seen as a trap. Del Mastro sees the various areas of influence acting upon her life as a social web from which she must disentangle herself (63). As the novel continues, these social circles become more and more interconnected, with the revelation that Ena is attempting to get revenge on Andrea's uncle Román, who lives in an attic room in the house on Aribau Street, for his poor treatment of her mother. Andrea reveals her growth in her ability to look beyond the face value of Ena's and Román's relationship; when Ena reveals her reasons for

trying to hurt Román, Andrea asks for details as she attempts to understand her friend's actions. She ultimately remarks that this experience changes her worldview:

En pocos días la vida se me aparecía distinta a como la había concebido hasta entonces. Complicada y sencillísima a la vez. Pensaba que los secretos más dolorosos y más celosamente guardados son quizá los que todos los de nuestro alrededor conocen. Tragedias estúpidas. Lágrimas inútiles. Así empezaba a aparecerme la vida entonces. [In only a day or two, life seemed different from the way I'd always conceived of it. Complicated and very simple at the same time. I thought that the most painful and jealously guarded secrets are perhaps the ones that everyone around us knows. Stupid tragedies. Useless tears. That's how life began to seem then] (Laforet 279, Grossman 219).

Andrea's processing of Ena's explanation of her relationship with Román directly aligns with a change in her worldview. This new understanding is possible because Andrea interrogates others' expectations rather than seeing them at face value, and because she directly notes that her previous viewpoint was flawed.

Andrea's Growing Sense of Agency

Andrea forms an identity through interrogating the social structures of the world. She grows over the course of the novel, to such an extent that Gloria remarks "Tú antes no le preguntabas nada a nadie, Andrea... Ahora te has vuelto más buena" [Before you never asked anybody anything, Andrea... You're nicer now] (Laforet 285). This episode occurs directly after Andrea has spent time exploring the city on her own terms, since all of her friends from the university are out of town to escape Barcelona's summer heat. It also contrasts with earlier scenes of Andrea's interactions with Gloria, where she seemed

too scared to ask anything about her pain, but seemingly ignored it instead. Gloria makes this observation after Andrea sees her crying and asks her what is wrong, an example of Andrea's growing capacity to empathize with those around her in a way that validates her own identity and allows her to learn things about the world on her own terms. This new ability to question is an example of a quest for agency; she learns the lesson which Bettelheim saw as the moral of the Cinderella tale she misinterpreted earlier in the story.

The novel's violence escalates as it approaches its conclusion. Andrea's conversation with Gloria comes after the narration describes Juan's treatment of Gloria in increasingly graphic terms. Domestic violence begins to affect the house on a tangible level. Once, as Andrea is observing their fight without any intervention, the force of a blow causes Gloria to fall back and crack the glass panes of a door between Andrea and the fight (Laforet 262). This episode leads Andrea to say to Gloria, "Tú y Juan sois como bestias. ¿Es que no cabe otra cosa entre un hombre y una mujer? ¿Es que no concibes nada más en el amor" [You and Juan are like beasts. Can't there be anything else between a man and a woman? Can't you conceive of anything else in love?] (Laforet 263, Grossman 208). Andrea sees the brokenness of the social system around her. Family and marriage, two concepts prioritized by Francoist ideology, are both corrupted within the house on Aribau Street. Andrea wants to find agency outside of not only her family's broken system but also outside of the fulfillment offered by marriage in general, as exhibited by her relationship with Pons. The violence of the family culminates with the suicide of Román, which Gloria claims has happened as the result of her threatening to report his illegal dealings on the black market to the Francoist authorities. With this final

blow, Laforet fully demonstrates the desperation of the novel's characters while directly linking this desperation to the social system in which they are embedded.

The 'Ending' of Andrea's Story

Andrea's story within the novel ends somewhat ambiguously and suddenly. After Román's suicide marks the end of the book's portrayal of violence. Ena unexpectedly intervenes with an invitation for Andrea to live with Ena's family in Madrid and work for her father. In some ways, these events appear to push the novel's narrative in a direction of comfort and security. Because it is an offer to replace the broken family unit with a better one, it may appear that this contrivance negates *Nada's* former condemnation of family as a concept vaunted by the Franco regime. However, this outcome prompts the reader to consider Andrea's future and allows her to find autonomy. There are no indications in the text that the family she is joining is one which will attempt to impose their values to reshape her identity. Whereas the traditional way of leaving the household, marriage, would have resulted in Andrea's becoming a legal minor under the guardianship of her husband, according to the laws of Spain at the time, by taking this path Andrea is able to form her own identity. Del Mastro says that with Ena's letter, "autonomy seems obtainable once again" (63). Ordóñez refers to a 'calculated openness' in *Nada's* final pages, describing "the neatness of the symbol of a new dawn, the setting out on a journey— while, at the same time, the selection of character and circumstance are such that the journey becomes a little less risky, the projected outcome a little more secure" (44). Andrea's fate is more complicated by the factor of her joining another family and moving to Madrid, the center of the Francoist government, but her increased autonomy is an undoubtedly positive outcome.

This ending of the novel justifies Andrea's desire for a new life which has presented itself throughout the narrative. Although it offers 'two eventualities,' as Ordóñez says, in any case, Andrea liberates herself from what has been up until this point an oppressive environment for her by choosing to go with Ena's family (51). Additionally, Andrea prioritizes her friendship with Ena over the family to which she belongs by blood. Up until this point, Laforet has demonstrated that Andrea's problems will not be solved by marriage, but in the final events of the story she offers an alternative: female friendship. Rodríguez says as follows: "se propone un desarrollo futuro basado en la continuación de la amistad femenina y no en el noviazgo o en el matrimonio, lo que supone una ruptura con anteriores modelos de desarrollo femenino" [the novel sets up a future development based on the continuation of female friendship and not in a relationship or marriage, meaning a rupture with previous models of female development] (16). The men with whom Andrea interacts in the story prove to be inadequate facilitators of Andrea's search for identity and agency; Ena provides an escape route. Hints of Andrea's desire for a different future which have been present throughout the story culminate in her departure from the house on Aribau Street, with the suffering and instability which characterized it. As Rodríguez says thusly, "su deseo de una nueva vida y de nuevos horizontes reaparece justo al finalizar la historia, en esa partida que se anticipa como una liberación" [her desire of a new life and new horizons reappears just as the story ends, in this departure that she anticipates like a liberation] (44). Andrea finds her identity and agency by leaving her family.

As Andrea narrates the final moments which she spends with her family, she distinguishes between her conceptualization of her time in Barcelona upon her departure

and her later knowledge of its effect on her. She says, “Me marchaba ahora sin haber conocido nada de lo que confusamente esperaba: la vida en su plenitud, la alegría, el interés profundo, el amor. De la casa de la calle de Aribau no me llevaba nada. Al menos, así creía yo entonces” [I was leaving now without having known any of the things I had confusedly hoped for: life in its plenitude, joy, deep interests, love. I was taking nothing from the house on Calle de Aribau. At least, that's what I thought then] (Laforet 303, Grossman 244). There is evidence throughout the novel that Andrea is narrating from the future, but in the final pages the distinction is striking because it shows that Andrea will take the experiences she has gained and apply them to a future where she creates a life that is her own. As Brown says, “Andrea reluctantly assumes the role of author not only in her narrative voice but in the narrative of her own life, eventually choosing to make decisions for herself” (63). After a long period of attempting to conform to the expectations of others, she finally asserts agency and takes control of her own life.

The Effect of Laforet's Double Discourse

The duality of Andrea's taking control of her life while moving to the center of Franco's government in Madrid demonstrates the double discourse present in the novel as a whole. Andrea narrates her own transformation from a girl who seeks out a future in marriage and family to one who is able to take on a new future without either of these stereotypical roles. *Nada* critiques the Francoist versions of family, marriage, and social class, but without censorship. Bakhtin's description of “double-voiced discourse” is a worthy explanation of this phenomenon, as the text presents what he called “the deforming influence of [another] speech act” (299). Laforet offers an escape route for her character, implying the existence of the rhetoric from which she escapes. Andrea's search

for identity in this novel represents an entire country's search for identity, and her transformation offers the possibility of the country's, especially its women who aim to achieve precisely that—an identity at variance with the regime's rhetoric.

CHAPTER THREE

Carmen Martín Gaité's *Entre visillos*: A Non-Conformist Finds her Voice

The censors who read Carmen Martín Gaité's first novel, *Entre visillos*, before publication called it "A provincial story about a group of girls, their studies and their love lives" (qtd. in O'Byrne 38). On the surface, it appears to be a novel describing the lives of a group of young people in 1950s Spain. In context, however, the novel critiques a society characterized by censorship and oppression. It presents characters who aggressively uphold the ideals of the dictatorship, yet cannot find happiness and contrast them with those characters who fail to conform but find hope in their individuality. In particular, the character Natalia's self-discovery and lack of conformity to prescribed social stereotypes for females are evidence for the novel's anti-Franco undertones. *Entre visillos*, read in its socio-historical context, becomes a portrait of a society in peril with non-conformity as the only hope for change. Because women lacked agency under the Franco regime, female characters who make steps towards agency and fail to conform to the system of which they are part function as a means of social criticism under the censors' noses. Thus, Martín Gaité uses double discourse and changes in narrative voice to underscore her indictment of fascism.

Entre visillos and the Changing Spanish Environment

'Los Años Grises': Spain in the 1950s

Entre visillos, published in 1958, appeared less than twenty years after General Francisco Franco took power after *La Guerra Civil*, or the Spanish Civil War. The setting

for the novel is a provincial town in Spain during the early 1950s, which Martín Gaité based on her home town of Salamanca (“Introduction” 5). As stated in the introduction, this time period is significant in Spanish history because the Franco regime had removed many of the essential human rights that the Spanish people, particularly women, gained during the Second Republic from 1930–1936 (Blackwell 28). By 1958, the regime had made even more progress with its agenda of removing what it saw as the harmful elements of the Second Republic’s policies. Helen Graham defines the basis for this abolition of human rights as the “politics of moral panic” prevalent throughout Europe during this time and the result of anxiety caused by the rapid social and economic changes of the twentieth century (184). The *nacionalistas* rescinded policies that they considered evidence of the moral decay of Spanish society, including the vote for women, divorce, and freedom for women to work outside the home.

Because of the destruction and conflict caused by the Spanish Civil War, “to seal victory in the post-war required the imposition not just of an authoritarian political framework and regressive economic policies, but also of a socially conservative project” (Graham 183). In order to impose their worldview on people who had been on the other side of the civil war, the regime implemented policies at every level of society. Their goal was to create a Catholic country in accordance with strict moral codes and reflected a return to the Golden Age of Spain, which they saw as being lost after the end of colonization.

As in the 1940s, the regime continued to ‘turn the clock back’ in terms of moral values by imposing traditional gender roles on women (Graham 184). This focus led to attempts to control the home environment through the promotion of specific ideals.

Graham defines this mentality as “a cult of morality,” the regime’s vision of what it meant to be a woman enforced through education and the idealization of specific figures (187). In the years between the publication of *Nada* and *Entre visillos*, the regime gained stability and power, expanding its sphere of influence to the home and the education system, dominated by the Catholic Church. One part of the controlling role the government played in the home was restricting the activities of women. They returned to the 1899 Civil Code, legalizing women’s inferiority by giving married women the legal status of minors (Graham 184). Additionally, laws such as the *Fuero del Trabajo* (“Work Decree”) of 1938 imposed limits on women’s ability to work outside their homes (Blackwell 28). These limitations, enshrined in the law and given value by the regime’s social structure, continued until the death of Franco in 1975 (Blackwell 28).

By the 1950s, the starvation and mass executions which had characterized the early years of the Francoist dictatorship had stopped. However, the trauma the Spanish people experienced continued to affect them even in its absence from the historical and journalistic record. Many supporters of the Second Republic left the country, and, as in the 1940s, censorship restrictions meant that any public discourse regarding the Civil War could not characterize it as other than a great victory. Censors searched for statements against the government, or the Franco regime, and against the church. Patricia O’Byrne states the implications of this censorship: “Any criticism of the limitations of their role in life had to be veiled or implied, because the censorship process... would not have permitted criticism of the regime, the Church, or the society they extolled” (37). Martín Gaité could publish *Entre visillos* only because the censor who read it did not notice any overt criticism of the Church or the State.

This historical background not only affected society as a whole, but the lives of individual women, who were held to an impossible moral standard and expected to abide by laws that forbade them from being individuals. According to Davies, the concept of agency means: “individuals are conceived as being in relation to something external to themselves called "society" which acts forcefully upon them and against which they can pit themselves” (42). A woman who asserts agency is inscribing herself upon her own life. She views herself as an individual rather than as a part of the collective. This model of agency aligns with Offen’s definition of individualistic feminism, which emphasizes autonomy in all parts of life (136). Francoist rhetoric, by contrast, stressed women’s inability to conceive themselves as anything other than part of the collective Spanish identity, and thus limited their agency. The Sección Femenina’s position was, as stated by Pilar Primo de Rivera in a speech directed at women who were meeting Nationalist soldiers returning from the war front, “la única misión que tienen asignada las mujeres en la tarea de la Patria es el hogar” [the only mission that women are assigned in the work of the fatherland is the home] (qtd. in del Rincón 73). These two contrasting positions on agency clash in *Entre visillos*.

The Civil War only appears in *Entre visillos* in passing since the characters generally focus instead on clothing and courtship. Martín Gaité focuses on the ways in which the problems created by the dictatorship have infiltrated even the most seemingly insignificant relationships. Censors found the novel to be about nothing more than a group’s love lives because Martín Gaité draws attention to the fact that this is all the young women talk about: “The Civil War and its ongoing repercussions seem like the elephant in the living room, affecting everyone but not openly discussed by anyone. The

characters' banal conversations highlight the grim reality that Spaniards could discuss only trivialities publicly” (Blackwell). The dialogue in this novel calls attention to not only what is present in it but, more importantly, what is absent.

Literary Techniques

Martín Gaité mounts her criticism of the lack of opportunities for young women in 1950s Spain through the use of *neorealismo*. Also known as objectivism or social realism, neorealismo was a popular literary technique during the 1950s in Spain, perhaps as a result of the implicit social criticism it permits. Thomas gives evidence for the social realism of *Entre visillos* by describing its plot as “‘a slice of life,’ just a few months in a provincial capital” (94). As a result of this technique, the novel often appears simply to relate events and fragmented conversations rather than following a clear narrative structure. Blackwell calls the novel a prime example of the social-realist genre (26). What *Entre visillos* has in common with other books in this genre is that it presents events in the lives of its characters, without apparently offering a critique or an opinion on what is happening, allowing authors in 1950s Spain to publish subtle social critique despite censorship.



Figure 4: Carmen Martín Gaité

Martín Gaité's personal life reflects the historical environment of *Entre visillos*, making some aspects of the novel autobiographical and even more closely tied to its socio-historical environment. For example, the high school which some of the characters, including Natalia, attend, was based on the 'Instituto Femenino' Martín Gaité attended in Salamanca ("Appendix" 238). The novel identifies the provincial town which composes its setting as Salamanca, which allows the story to feel as though it could have occurred anywhere in Spain at this time period.

Entre visillos incorporates various narrative voices and narrative forms: diary entries, letters, as well as both first-person and third-person accounts. These multiple voices relate a few months in the lives of a group of young women and young men. Many of its characters are participating in the rituals of courtship, and the book presents a stark contrast between the ways in which the story's women and men participate in these courtship rituals. The dominant male voice of the story, that of Pablo Klein, is presented in first-person chapters. The female voices, with the notable exception of Natalia in her

diary entries and toward the end of the novel, are mediated in the third-person, in their conversations about their social lives. This detail can be interpreted as a subtle critique of society; as Blackwell observes, “These narrative patterns reflect a patriarchal society that values male speech but not that of females” (Blackwell 28). Their narration is one way in which the female characters are veiled *entre visillos*, or ‘behind the curtains.’

Natalia: Leaving the Curtains

Unlike her sisters and friends, the character Natalia manages to communicate in the first-person. A sixteen-year-old, Natalia is expected to enter into the society of which that her sisters are a part. However, throughout the novel she resists her sisters’ lifestyles and demonstrates a desire for more in her own life. Although Natalia is present in the third-person sections of the book and in Pablo’s accounts, she communicates her displeasure with the state of her life and the lives around her through her diary entries and eventually through an unmediated chapter near the end of the novel, with the result that she is a voice against the social order imposed by others in the novel. Natalia’s father and aunt personify the social order. Her father is not in favor of her going away to university, while her aunt limits her leaving the house and encourages her sisters to live up to a very specific idea of femininity which she believes will help them to find husbands and settle down.

Societal Norms Within Entre visillos

The majority of the female characters, consisting of Natalia’s sisters and their friends, remain limited to their socially defined roles. Blackwell argues that the spectrum of female characters in *Entre visillos* offer variants of approaches to life in this society, and that, “Natalia’s three older sisters represent women’s limited possibilities in the

prevailing social paradigm” (29). Most of the women in *Entre visillos* see traditional marriage as the only path out of their monotonous lives. Julia laments the fact that her boyfriend has not yet proposed to her. The Franco regime’s female ideal of wife and mother as communicated in *Entre visillos* is perpetuated by the same young women whose lives it limits. Because Natalia’s sisters and her friends are “prototypes of the social-approved ‘traditional young woman,’” they are forced to subscribe to a designated set of ideals in order to avoid conflict with their society. They believe that they will live good lives and find happy marriages if they are able to crush their individuality (“The Nonconformist Character” 168). These young women stand *entre visillos*, or ‘behind the curtains,’ “waiting in the wings for the patriarchal society to fit them with predictable, preassigned masks before they walk out on to the center stage of life” (Collins 66). The characters appear to believe that if they fulfill their role correctly, they will be happy, and they do not see any other path.

These roles play out when Gertru discusses her future with her boyfriend, Ángel. She tells him that she only needs one more class to finish her high school degree, and that she is thinking about matriculating so that she can finish. He tells her not to, saying, “Para casarte conmigo, no necesitas saber latín ni geometría; conque sepas ser una mujer de tu casa, basta y sobra” [You don’t need to know Latin or geometry to marry me; if you know how to be a housewife that’s enough and more than enough] (*Entre visillos* 171, López-Morillas 185). Ángel’s voice in the story is an example of the conservative ideology driving the Spanish national identity at the time of the novel’s publication. When Gertru presses on about her education, he tells her “lo que más me molesta de una mujer es que sea testaruda” [what bothers me most in a woman is for her to be stubborn]

and she gives in (*Entre visillos* 171, López-Morillas 185). By presenting this section of the text in the third person without any overt criticism, Martín Gaité allows the reader to draw a conclusion on their own about Ángel's character and the view he espouses. With scenes such as this one, the author presents the way things are in Spanish society without comment.

The young women in the story who reflect more traditional ideals demonstrate an obsession with their personal appearances. This singular focus is reflected in Natalia's observations about how she has learned to fit in in her own home:

para pasar inadvertida es mejor hacer ruido y hablar... Siempre que me acuerdo canto por los pasillos y tengo cara de buen humor, y he empezado a mirar figurines y a dar opiniones sobre los trajes de las hermanas... También he dicho que quiero unos zapatos nuevos. [to be inconspicuous...it's better to make noise and talk... I sing in the hall and look cheerful, and I've started to look at patterns and offer opinions about my sisters' dresses, and to say... that I want some new shoes] (*Entre visillos* 219, López-Morillas 238).

Fox says that the dresses that the girls wear “represent the order, boundaries, and control to which females were subjected” (46). Natalia's refusal to wear a long dress and preference for old shoes demonstrate her lack of conformity with the boundaries prescribed for her. Natalia's father has sent for fabric for her to have a new *traje de noche* (evening gown), but it has not yet been made, with the sole reason being that Natalia does not want to begin participating in the same charades as her sister do. Marsha Collins calls Natalia's refusal to wear the clothes her family insists are more appropriate for school “an expression of nonconformity, the rebellious act of a young woman with a fine mind

immune to the traditional feminine obsession with personal appearance” (67). Natalia is objecting to the inauthenticity her society demands of her.

Natalia Separates Herself from Societal Expectations

When Natalia goes to the Casino at which her sisters spend the majority of their nights, the social scene overwhelms her. In some ways, her discomfort seems like that which any sixteen-year-old girl might feel at an event with people older than she is, as she digs her nails into her palms and repeats to herself, “Que no hablen de mi” [Let them not pay any attention to me] (*Entre visillos* 66, López-Morillas 65). She refuses first to drink cognac, then to dance with Manolo, a friend of her sisters, despite the fact that he repeatedly invites her. When he asks her why she has come to the Casino if not to participate in its social environment of dancing, she responds that she does not know how to dance, nor does she want Manolo to teach her. Manolo does not understand this rejection, or why she continues to distance herself from him using the formal *usted* (*Entre visillos* 69). Natalia wishes that she were outside of the scene in which she finds herself: “Se debía ver bien... desde un avión que planeara encima de este hormiguo” [it would be better...to look out of an airplane that was gliding over this busy activity] (*Entre visillos* 69, López-Morillas 68). Natalia's resistance to conformity ultimately shows her resistance to social stereotypes for females. In the end, Natalia becomes overwhelmed and leaves the Casino to go for a walk instead.

One way in which Natalia refuses to abide by her social structure's rules is in her friendship with a girl at her school named Alicia, described as ‘poorly dressed.’ Alicia's attire makes the reader conscious of the class difference between the two girls. Still, Natalia writes in her diary, “me gusta estar con ella más que con las otras chicas,” [I like

to be with her more than the other girls] (*Entre visillos* 181, López-Morillas 195). Natalia cites her reasoning as the fact that Alicia does not fill her conversation with the ‘bobadas,’ or nonsense, that other girls seem to spout. At one point, Alicia comes over to Natalia’s house so that the girls can work on homework together. Alicia notices that Natalia’s aunt, a representative of societal standards in the novel, does not like her: she says to Natalia, “Yo a tu tía no le gusto nada, ¿verdad?” [Your aunt doesn’t like me at all, right?] (*Entre visillos* 218, López-Morillas 237). Natalia notes that her aunt avoids directly addressing Alicia and refers to her as ‘that girl’ (*Entre visillos* 218, López-Morillas 237). Still, she responds to Alicia by saying “Y a mí qué me importa si le gustas o no, eres mi amiga” [What do I care if she likes you or not, you’re my friend] and insists that she continue coming over to her house (*Entre visillos* 218, López-Morillas 237). That Natalia maintains this friendship despite its impropriety demonstrates her rebellion against societal values.

Natalia’s German professor, Pablo Klein, encourages her to pursue a university education despite the fact that her father does not want her to do so or think she needs advanced education to fulfill her societal duty. Pablo does not understand why her father would not want her to pursue a university degree when Natalia is clearly intelligent and interested in her studies (*Entre visillos* 183, López-Morillas 198). He encourages her to ask whether she can continue her education. In her diary, Natalia writes that Pablo simply does not understand her home environment: “no conoce a papá y no ha oído las conversaciones que se tienen en boca y las críticas que se hacen” [he doesn’t know Papa and hasn’t heard the conversations they have at home and the criticisms they make]

(*Entre visillos* 183, López-Morillas 198). Her father's refusal provides yet another example of the strength of the opposition to Natalia's efforts towards individuality.

In her diary entries, Natalia openly mocks the girls around her who conform to social standards. At one point, she says that most of the girls in her school “se ríen siempre de todo y por las bobadas más grandes” [always laugh at everything and about the stupidest things] (*Entre visillos* 181, López-Morillas 195). O'Byrne sees Natalia's diary as an essential part of her ability to critique her society because it allows her to “raise taboo issues, such as the steering of young girls into marriage, attitudes towards women's education, and the restrictive clothing of women—all topics... mentioned in the opening pages” (40). The confidential nature of these diary entries, paired with a striking objectivity about the state of society, allows these diary entries to be a subtle critique and provide ways for the reader to hear Natalia's words, unmediated by a third-person narrator.

First-person: Natalia's Narration

Natalia comes closest to open critique of the social order when she begins a conversation with her father with the intent of telling him that she wants to go to the university. In her diary, she relates how everything that she wanted to tell him came spilling out of her, including her perception of the education her aunt has given her:

la tía Concha nos quiere convertir en unas estúpidas, que sólo nos educa para tener un novio rico, y que seamos lo más retrasadas posible en todo, que no sepamos nada ni nos alegremos con nada, encerradas como el buen paño que se vende en el arca [Auntie Concha wants to make us into stupid women, that she's only bringing us up to find a rich sweetheart and wants us to be as backward as

possible in everything, that she doesn't want us to know anything or enjoy anything, shut up in here like good cloth] (*Entre visillos* 228, López-Morillas 249).

She has begun to recognize the difference between what her aunt wants for her and what she wants for herself. Natalia expresses a yearning for understanding, typical of a character who does not conform with the society around her. She finally says “Le he dicho que si tengo que ser una mujer resignada y razonable, prefiero no vivir” [I told him if I have to be a resigned, reasonable woman, I'd rather not live] (*Entre visillos* 229, López-Morillas 250). The Natalia of this chapter is certainly not on the path to becoming a respectable woman in the terms of her society.

Natalia relates this conversation with her father unmediated by a third-person narrator. Natalia narrates two of the book's chapters, which does not match the seven narrated by Pablo Klein but represents that as the book draws to its conclusion, she is beginning to process the world on her own terms, without needing the aid of even her diary. Bakhtin argues that “when there is no adequate form for an unmediated expression of an author's intentions, it becomes necessary to refract them through another's speech” (292). By giving Natalia her own chapters to narrate, Martín Gaité offers the audience the closest possible approximation of her own views, while still protecting herself from criticism and censorship. Of course, Natalia does not critique the dictatorship—she critiques the social structures it has fostered within Spain. She critiques a world in which women are expected to pursue courtship rituals and not much else. Like *Nada*, then, the double discourse in *Entre visillos* implies a speech act which is not present in the novel. Martín Gaité refracts her own viewpoint through Natalia, contrasting her with the other

women in the story who appear only in their shallow dialogue. She also injects Natalia's words with a hidden polemic, a response to a society which does not offer her opportunities.

Finding Hope in Natalia's Future

By the end of the novel, Natalia's path forward is hopeful, though not decisive or even outwardly positive. Natalia's sister Julia goes to Madrid, leaving Natalia standing on the train platform, looking after her. In the final scene, Pablo Klein reiterates to Natalia the importance of her education a final time, telling her not to 'lose her nerve' (López-Morillas 278). She claims that she is more convinced to follow his advice and continue to study biology, but the reader does not know whether or not she will go to university in the end; that question is left open.

La Chica Rara

Natalia represents a critique of the social order through nonconformity to it. In her book on literary theory, *Desde la ventana*, Martín Gaité described an archetype known as the *chica rara* ('odd girl'). She referred to it as, "This paradigm of a woman, which in one way or another calls in question the 'normality' of the romantic and domestic conduct that society tells them to criticize" ("La chica rara" 99). The use of the *chica rara* allows *Entre visillos* to critique its society subtly. Martín Gaité also lists some characteristics of this paradigm: "They will dare to be off key, to settle in marginalization and think from that perspective; they are going to be conscious of their exceptional nature, living it with a mix of helplessness and pride. In general, they are girls that have few friends, that prefer the friendship of men" ("La chica rara" 100). By participating in this 'off key' stereotype, Natalia is the antithesis of her society's paradigm of femininity.

Natalia is the one female character who maintains her own voice. The females in the novel, like those in society, can only “look at life ‘entre visillos,’ or ‘between the curtains,’ from inside their rooms” (Blackwell 31). In comparison, the apparent objectivity and male subjectivity of the first-person narrative perspectives in *Entre visillos* is an important component of its social critique. By presenting a “slice of life,” Martín Gaité implicitly identifies problems within society. For example, the one time that the novel mentions Franco by name occurs when Natalia mentions the portrait of him hanging on the wall of the Instituto Feminino. While this passing reference is not an obvious social criticism, the reader can infer the degree to which he and his ideology have integrated themselves into every level of society, including Natalia’s school.

Another way to see the social criticism within *Entre visillos* is by viewing it as a *bildungsroman*, a novel which “chronicles the passage from adolescence to adulthood as the protagonist develops ethical values and integrates into prevailing social structures” (Blackwell 32). What makes Natalia’s story different from that of other *bildungsromans* is that the transition it depicts is not complete. Rather, the novel shows Natalia’s attempt to make a transition. Her choices are left open at the end of the novel. This work “leaves her choices open instead of following her progress to adulthood. [Natalia searches] for personal identity in the face of enormous social pressure to conform to female roles designated by a patriarchal society” (Blackwell 32). The reader never knows whether she will pursue her dream of going to university, or whether she will remain trapped in her provincial town, trapped by her society.

Resolution and Irresolution

Martín Gaité purposefully leaves the story without clear resolution because when she wrote this book, Spain was still a country under dictatorship. The story of Natalia was the story of many young women in 1958, including Martín Gaité herself. She writes for her own generation, and offers them hope in the form of her character. “She was one of the *niños de la guerra* (‘children of the war’), the generation whose first memory of the [Spanish Civil War] was that it interrupted their summer vacations” (“Introduction” 3–4). Additionally, she acknowledges that her own life is inseparable from her portrayals of such conflictive situations” (“The Nonconformist Character” 165). Martín Gaité is part of the generation about which she writes; Through close observation and autobiographical elements, the writer creates a story with the possibility of a hopeful future. Martín Gaité demands that the audience have hope not only for Natalia, but for their society.

Natalia’s rebellion is a relevant social critique despite its lacking a grand scale. Lipman Brown calls her small acts “mildly heroic” because of the strength of the ideology against which she struggles (“The Nonconformist Character” 168). Natalia refuses to wear uncomfortable clothes, to flirt with men with whom she does not want to engage, and to pretend that she is not an extremely bright student. Of course, these stances are all tentative steps towards rebellion, and Thomas is correct when he says “Her resistance is largely ineffective in influencing others in the culture” (107). Natalia is an exception to the rule, and because of this uniqueness her ‘mild heroism’ is all the more important. These acts are still more important in a society where women were not supposed to pursue or value intelligence in themselves; as Pilar Primo de Rivera said,

Si la cultura se lleva hasta el punto de que la mujer queda en un ávido producto intelectual... entonces la cultura es totalmente negativa, pero gracias a Dios en España no suele darse ese tipo de mujer puramente intelectual [If culture comes to a point at which women become eager intellectual products... then the culture is totally negative, but thanks be to God in Spain we don't usually have that type of purely intellectual woman] (qtd. in del Rincón 75).

Natalia's acknowledgement of her status as a bright student who has the potential to go on to study in a male-dominated field, biology, exists in conversation with the Francoist rhetoric which limits her potential. Through a double discourse, Martín Gaité implies the half of the conversation which is not stated in the text.

Optimism in Martín Gaité's Double Discourse

Natalia's story is hopeful regardless of whether she will go on to university because *Entre visillos* shows her finding her voice. Her critiques of society, small at first, culminate at the end of the novel in an outright condemnation. Martín Gaité goes as far as she can without triggering censorship. In her "Autobiographical Sketch," Martín Gaité describes herself as an an optimist, saying, "even in the darkest moments I try to keep in mind that hope may always be reborn, while there is life" (Appendix 245). This perspective can be applied to her fiction; Natalia represents a hope for Spain as a whole. The beginning of her self-discovery and her speaking against a society which demands that she subscribe to a specific ideal of womanhood is enough to provide a hopeful perspective for a society living in the shadow of fascism.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion: The Possibilities of Societal Critique Through Double Discourse

Even fictional women can threaten the rhetoric of a society which prioritizes women's subservience and lack of agency. In *Nada* by Carmen Laforet and *Entre visillos* by Carmen Martín Gaité, young female protagonists distinguish themselves from the dominant discourse of their society. In doing so, these women and their narratives offer concealed critiques of the regime. Because of the censorship restrictions the Francoist dictatorship placed upon Laforet and Martín Gaité, as both women and writers, they found themselves forced to express the importance of female agency through these novels. *Nada* and *Entre visillos* use the technique of double discourse to express criticism of the limits contemporary Spanish society's vision for women placed upon them.

Nada and Entre Visillos in Context

Post-War Spain and The Decline of Female Agency

As we have seen, the end of the Second Republic and rise of Franco's dictatorship meant that women lost rights in every sphere of life. Encoded into the law, inequality became more than a matter of hidden prejudice or unconscious bias against women, but an idea reinforced and supported by strict ideology. Women needed spousal permission to do things as simple as getting a passport or opening a bank account (Graham 184). Francoist rhetoric necessitated that women exist as perfected Catholic ideals of mothers and wives focused on caring for their husbands and raising their children to be the next generation of Spaniards who would begin what the government defined as a revitalization

of Spain's previous golden age. Intending to make woman and the family indivisible, the regime attempted to prevent women from having any independent agency.

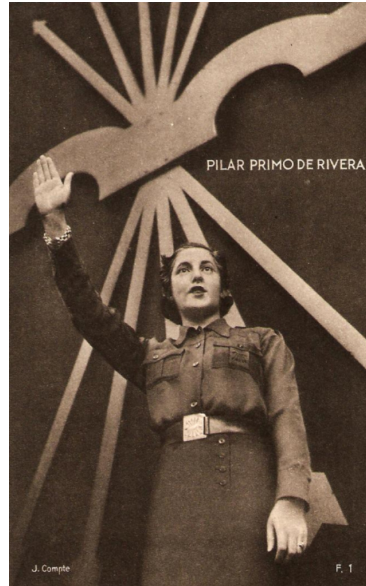


Figure 5: Pilar Primo de Rivera, postcard

Still, as Graham says, “there is no such thing as 'women in general' and no such thing as their typical experience” (183). There were women on both sides of Spain's ideological divide: many women joined the Sección Femenina. José Antonio Primo de Rivera, who founded the Falange, made his sister, Pilar Primo de Rivera, the leader of this organization. She claimed that it demonstrated the proper role of women:

Lo propio de la Sección Femenina es el servicio en silencio, la labor abnegada, sin prestancia exterior, pero profunda. Como es el temperamento de las mujeres: abnegación y silencio... cuanto más abnegadas, más falangistas y más femeninas seremos [What is typical of the Sección Femenina is service in silence, self-sacrificing labor, without exterior poise, but deep. This is how women's

temperament is: selflessness and silence... the more selfless, the more falangist and more feminine we will be] (qtd. in del Rincón 75).

As stated in the introduction, The Sección Femenina accomplished its goal of education through the promulgation of these values in workshops and training. The Sección Femenina was a contradictory organization in many ways, promoting the subordination of women and their ultimate need to make their homes happy places for their husbands while its leader, Pilar Primo de Rivera seemed to exemplify the type of powerful woman Spain did not intend to produce, one who did not marry and lived apart from family.

Censorship and Double Discourse

Strict censorship requirements required all literature, films, and other works brought into Spain's public sphere to refrain from criticism of the regime as well as of the Catholic Church. The two were inextricably linked, with the State claiming to be a governing body rooted in the principles of the Church. The censors had the right to read books before their publication and ensure that they would not corrupt the Spanish people. For example, censors blocked Ana María Matute's *Luciérnagas* in 1949. Matute re-published the book as *En esta tierra* in 1955, but eventually published *Luciérnagas* in 1993. Other artists fled Spain, such as Luis Buñuel, the surrealist director who moved to Mexico and made movies there. Artists who chose to remain within their contexts without compromising the true message of their work found themselves forced to engage in double discourse, a technique which implies a distance between what is said on the page and the author's intended message. Bakhtin says that because artists cannot always engage in direct speech, when they confront social constraints such as censorship, "any creative intention... must be refracted through the medium of another speech act... with

which it cannot immediately merge without reservation, distance, refraction” (302). It may require some layers of analysis to get to the core of what an author suggests in a piece. When writers use double discourse as defined by Bakhtin, they express one opinion while taking into account how their environment will shape it, even to the extent that a text means the exact opposite of what it says on a surface level.

Double discourse plays a role in post-war narrative fiction because the regime did not permit the depiction of certain parts of reality. It engaged in historical erasure of its many executions as well as the starvation and other problems which resulted from its policies of economic autarky. Histories and newspapers written during this time are generally not completely reliable as sources of information because of the censorship of the regime’s actions. Since Franco’s death and the transition to democracy, historians have continued to publish new knowledge of the regime’s policies. For example, in 2018 the first trial for the members of Franco’s regime who engaged in the practice of ‘stealing’ babies of Republican dissidents began. History now has a greater grasp of the atrocities committed during the dictatorship, but journalistic publications from immediately after the war were limited in their ability to communicate them. Literary fiction, though it might not be able to depict the details of these aspects of history, through double discourse was able to re-frame the events which took place and subtly question the underlying rhetoric.

Comparing Nada and Entre Visillos

This double discourse appears differently in different literary movements, as well as in the distinct environments of the 1940s and the 1950s. *Nada* by Carmen Laforet

demonstrates the presence of double discourse within the *tremendismo* of the 1940s; *Entre Visillos* by Carmen Martín Gaité, within the *neorealismo* of the 1950s. Both of these novels contain limited references to historical events while succeeding in communicating the general mood of the time.

Nada: Shattering the Francoist Myth of Family

As we saw in Chapter 2, *Nada* reveals the bleak state of one particular family in Barcelona during a time when much of the Spanish population suffered with food insecurity and starvation, especially those of the lower classes. *Nada* also uses the literary technique of *tremendismo* to underscore its violence within the context of the family and in doing so point to the larger problem of violence occurring on a state level. *Nada* makes a statement about Spanish society through its protagonist's engagement with a world of societal expectations as Andrea searches for herself in the opinions of others. The reader sees the Spanish environment of the 1940s through the eyes of an eighteen-year-old girl who grows in her confidence of her own judgement throughout the novel. Had Laforet included more explicit social criticism, it is highly likely the book would not have been published. As a result of her portraying her themes through a thick enough lens that the censors could not see them, Laforet not only published her novel but won literary acclaim for it, receiving the Premio Nadal in 1944.

Entre Visillos: The Meaninglessness of Courtship

As stated in Chapter 3, Martín Gaité's double discourse in *Entre Visillos* conveys many of the same themes as *Nada* although in a different context. By 1957, Spain was somewhat more stable, though still struggling with the aftermath of the war. The literary style of this decade turned to *neorealismo*, a technique representing the novel as a 'slice

of life.’ In the novel *Entre Visillos*, dialogue is often present without narrative intrusion, and Martín Gaité uses various narrative perspectives. In this context, the double discourse serves a different purpose. Rather than portraying extreme violence and revealing within it the historical background, Martín Gaité describes small injustices and beliefs into which the young men and women who are her characters have fallen. The novel’s ‘true’ message is revealed in the character who stands apart from all the rest, that of Natalia. She questions the world around her in a way that the other characters do not, and in this way forces the reader to ask certain questions. Why does society require all the young women to dress in a certain way? Why are all these women so determined to get engaged and married? Why do the young men treat the young women so poorly? The answers to these questions hide in plain sight, in the very structure of the society Martín Gaité describes. As Natalia questions her society and gains a narrative voice, Martín Gaité reveals its myriad of problems while, like Laforet, gaining literary acclaim and the Premio Nadal.

Social Criticism in Both Novels

Both of these novels are examples of the *bildungsroman*; they demonstrate the moment in their respective protagonists’ lives in which they become full human beings, and emphasize their education as part of this process. This search for identity is a radical act because these narratives permit Andrea and Natalia to have agency which their counterparts in Spanish society of this day would not have had. Both novels are open-ended, allowing readers to draw conclusions on their own about the paths that these young women will take. This ambiguity invites an analysis of these characters’ society: its values, its limitations, its ideology. When taking context into account, the small

examples of rebellion which appear in both novels are radical acts, departures from the dominant narrative and goal for women at the time when Laforet and Martín Gaité wrote them.

In both of these novels, the protagonists become agents in their own lives. They engage in a creative process of deciding who they will be. The idea that women could create anything, much less their own identity, would have been anathema to Pilar Primo de Rivera, who stated the following:

Las mujeres nunca descubren nada, les falta desde luego el talento creador, preservado por Dios para inteligencias varoniles, nosotras no podemos hacer más que interpretar mejor o peor lo que los hombres nos dan hecho [Women never discover anything, they lack the creative talent preserved by God for masculine intelligence; we cannot do more than interpret better or worse that which men have already made and given to us] (qtd. in Noval Clemente 75).

According to the rhetoric of the Sección Femenina, women are not capable of creating or discovering anything, least of all themselves or their identities. Neither *Nada* nor *Entre visillos* references a speech of Pilar Primo de Rivera or a publication of the Sección Femenina. However, double discourse means that these outside speech acts shape these novels without their authors' directly referencing them.

Beyond Laforet and Martín Gaité

Other authors in the post-war period also critiqued the aspects of society which Laforet and Martín Gaité noted. Ana María Matute's *Primera Memoria* communicates the Civil War as seen through the eyes of a teenage girl who finds herself displaced from it in a move from Barcelona to Mallorca. This work engages in similar themes of social

criticism without triggering the censors. In the 1960s, Mercè Rodoreda's Catalan work *La plaça del diamant* again portrayed the reality of the war and post-war period in more explicit ways, while still cognizant of the limits of censorship. In 1978, after Franco's death in 1975, Martín Gaité published *El cuarto de atrás*, a re-working of many of the themes and narratives contained in *Entre visillos*, but without the same constraints. The approach of double discourse and themes of agency appear in other societies, particularly during the twentieth century, though in many ways the approach which Laforet and Martín Gaité use is unique to their situation.

In a society which kept females from attaining agency, narratives which develop a female character's agency and sense of self are critiquing society. Double discourse is a technique allowing authors to raise issues of agency or lack thereof while still working under the constraints of official censorship or societal limitations. The problems addressed in *Nada* and *Entre visillos* are not particular to Spain, and the solution that Andrea and Natalia offer is effective against a variety of ideologies which threaten the agency of women and other marginalized groups. *Nada* and *Entre visillos* demonstrate the potential of literature to reveal cracks in the societal veneers which cover human rights abuses such as those committed by the Francoist dictatorship. By writing characters who are an affront to the values of the regime, Laforet and Martín Gaité critique the system as a whole. Unfortunately, it would be almost fifty years before Spanish women would legally gain the agency for which Andrea and Natalia struggle, but these stories continue to offer hope that self-discovery and agency are possible in spite of the restrictions of an oppressive system.

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