

ABSTRACT

The Evolving Narrator in the Spanish Novel (1884-1958):
La de Bringas, Niebla, and Entre visillos

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The function of the narrator in Spanish literature is evolving, but the narrative voice continues to play a crucial role in communicating the message of the work, whether forcefully, playfully, or subtly. *La de Bringas* (1884), by Benito Pérez Galdós, exemplifies the Realist movement with its monolithic, intrusive narrator who mocks his society and those around him, yet the narrator also ironizes himself and undercuts his narrative through unreliable narrating. Part of the Generation of 1898, *Niebla* (1914), by Miguel de Unamuno, is ostensibly narrated by the author, yet this fictive Unamuno enters into the text to converse with his characters; the narrative innovation reflects the work's philosophical approach, which deals with questions of individual authentic existence. *Entre visillos* (1958), written by Carmen Martín Gaité in a time of strict censorship, uses multiple narrators in a Social Realist style that critiques its oppressive society between the lines.

The Evolving Narrator in the Spanish Novel (1884-1958):

La de Bringas, Niebla, and Entre visillos

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To the reader: because you make all the difference

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction: The Evolving Function of the Narrator

Spanish political and social upheaval in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with a procession of governments including monarchy, oligarchy, republic, dictatorship, and democracy, led the country on a circuitous route to “modernity.” During this time, contemporary historians and politicians often saw Spain as backward or behind in comparison to its more developed western European neighbors. This unique social climate also contributed to a distinct literary trajectory, which followed behind France and England for much of the nineteenth century, producing both romantic and realist movements, but broke away from international trends with the Generation of 1898, when the loss of Spain’s final overseas territories led to an identity crisis at both the national and individual level. Later, the Franco regime (1939-1975) effectively cut Spanish writers off from the rest of the literary world and forced them to seek ways to deal with a specific set of issues in a society full of injustice and elided discontent while avoiding official censorship. They responded with a return to realism, providing a keen reflection of social conditions while maintaining an objective style of representation. Thus, an examination of the narrator’s role in representative novels from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries offers key insights into how that role has been shaped by and is thus reflective of Spain’s social upheavals during these years.

The three novels which constitute the focus of this study, *La de Bringas* by Benito Pérez Galdós (1884), *Niebla* by Miguel de Unamuno (1914), and *Entre visillos* by Carmen Martín Gaité (1958), fit into these larger social and literary trends while also

handling the role of the narrator in distinct ways to reinforce each text's unique socio-philosophical discourse. Benito Pérez Galdós is vital to any comparative study that includes Spanish literature of his time. He epitomizes the realist movement in Spanish literature, which seeks to detail accurately the physical, psychological, and social conditions of the late nineteenth century, and pays homage to the time's evolutionary theories in science and philosophy. Galdós's diverse and prolific works have received much critical acclaim in the last hundred years. While not as famous as *Fortunata y Jacinta*, *La de Bringas* (1884) is a typical Galdosian *novela contemporánea*, a serial novel of irony and social criticism. In it, Galdós crafts biting social commentary that focuses on the follies of individuals and ironizes human nature and society by underlining the hypocrisy of the peripherally dramatized, unreliable narrator, and through him, the entire cast of characters. The positivistic, pessimistic undergirding of the movement is reflected in his subject matter, and he heightens the irony of the situation in the way he presents the material.

Miguel de Unamuno's *Niebla* (1914, 1935), in which a derisive tone overlays deep existential doubt, sharply contrasts with Galdós's satirical realism. Unamuno, arguably the greatest author of the Generation of 98, crafted *Niebla* as his masterwork, in which he layers the quest for existential meaning with individual ironies and cultural jibes, while the narrator, a representation of himself, makes an appearance as a character and on occasion relinquishes the story to other voices. Unamuno the narrator acts as an unobtrusive but opinionated third-person narrator for the majority of the novel, although he interjects portions of more direct discourse at key places. The tone oscillates between irony and existential angst, while the narrative culminates in the final chapters during

which protagonist Augusto Pérez meets the author-character Unamuno, discovers his own fictionality, and calls his creator's existence into question. The addition of a prologue written by Víctor Goti, a character in the work, and an epilogue narrated by Pérez's dog Orfeo complete the cacophony.

Writing half a century later, Carmen Martín Gaité joins her contemporaries in a form of social realism that reproduces the quotidian existence of Franco Spain. In *Entre visillos* (1957), she explores the interwoven lives of youth in a provincial city (probably Salamanca) by rotating primarily between the first-person narration of Pablo Klein, a German teacher at the Instituto Femenino, and an undramatized third-person narrator's account. This undramatized narrator focalizes through various characters, usually female, and sometimes provides intercalated first-person accounts in the form of letters or journal entries. Furthermore, sixteen-year-old Natalia narrates two chapters entirely, though it is unclear if she writes in her journal or to an outside audience. The novel dwells on the lives and relationships of several young women, who nonetheless are not given voice to express themselves to the reader as directly as Klein does. In a time when writers outside Spain were focusing on technical exploration, Martín Gaité used technical play in narrative voice to emphasize her social criticism on themes such as gender, society, and identity in contemporary Spain.

Each novel reflects not only the changing literary trends of Spain, but also its social and historical context in a broader sense. Spanish history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries consisted of a milieu of governmental instability and a succession of power-grabs by conservatives and liberals alike. According to Mary Vincent, the Spanish government lacked stability because no government could fully justify its prerogative to

rule. “Political violence became endemic in Spain because victory could not be converted into legitimacy. Only in the late twentieth century did a form of state power develop that was overwhelmingly recognized as having the right to rule” (1). This pattern of change was exemplified in the War for Independence from France (1808-1814), during which liberal legislators exiled from Madrid developed the Constitution of 1812 in Cádiz. This constitution, while never fully in effect in Spain, became a pole star for other liberal movements, particularly as Spain’s colonies gained their independence. When Ferdinand VII ascended to the throne in 1814, absolute monarchy returned to Spain, and when he died in 1833, the question of his daughter’s legitimacy to rule consumed the nation in three Carlist wars over the next four decades. Isabel II was finally deposed in the relatively bloodless Glorious Revolution of 1868. This political turmoil provides the historical backdrop against which the plot of *La de Bringas* takes place. However, Galdós wrote the novel sixteen years later in 1884, following six years of volatile political instability and a decade under the reign of Alfonso XII, who held more power theoretically than those who had crowned him allowed him to practice. “The desire was for peace and stability, which over the next quarter-century was to be met to a very considerable degree by the arrangements known as the Restoration settlement,” by which Spain modeled its social and economic ideas on Britain (Ross 29). A year after the publication of *La de Bringas*, Alfonso XII died, leaving the throne to his son Alfonso XIII, who began to rule after the eighteen-year regency of his mother, Maria Cristina.

During the regency of Maria Cristina, Spain, still less industrialized than its neighbors, lost its last colonies in the Spanish-American War in 1898, creating a national identity crisis. In the 1880s, the country had gained some economic stability due to an

international demand for iron after the invention of the Bessemer process. However, the loss of the Philippines and American colonies that comprised the last remnants of its empire in the “Great Disaster” of 1898 provoked a “process of national self-examination” in which regenerationists clashed with regionalists and workers’ movements (Ross 39). Spain’s socially and politically repressive climate had already been fodder for realist and naturalist literature, and the environment did not improve with the turn of the century. Politically humiliating, its loss of empire “exacerbated an already existing pessimism among intellectuals about Spain’s national and racial ‘degeneration’” (“Spain”). According to Gerald Brown, an air of frivolity also marked the time. “The pessimism of the writers of the so-called Generation of 1898 contrasts strangely with the general public’s indefatigable pursuit of amusement and pleasure” (1). The writers themselves shared in this paradox in that their pessimism often manifested itself in Bohemian or grotesque flamboyance. For example, Brown states, “Unamuno’s spiritual anguish is often disconcertingly expressed in what seems to be playful jesting” (1). While some authors focused on national identity or adopted “anti-authoritarian postures” in response to the injustices that they saw (2), Unamuno came to ponder individual more than national identity in order to explore fully his philosophical questions. Critic Brown calls him the first Spanish novelist to break with the realist trend of his contemporaries (14).

The political and social situation in Spain did not immediately improve. World War I found Alfonso XIII, who assumed power in 1902, facing increased criticism from politicians, regionalists, and the workers unions. In this period of political ferment Unamuno published *Niebla* (1914), focusing more on individual than national identity and using experimental novelistic techniques. In 1923, General Miguel Primo de Rivera

gained dictatorial power in a coup d'état with Catalan regionalist support and the tacit agreement of Alfonso XIII. However, Primo de Rivera's plan to regenerate Spain economically and ideologically was not successful and he lost the support of the army and the king during a recession in 1930. Because of Alfonso XIII's original support of the Primo de Rivera dictatorship, much of the country turned against him. After the elections of 1931, in which a majority of voters approved a republic, he was forced to leave Spain in order to avert civil war ("Spain"). During the last years of Alfonso XIII, the divisions between various conservative and liberal elements of Spanish society were growing stronger, and the intellectuals rallied in support of their own political views, mostly against the dictatorship of Primo de Rivera and the monarchy. Their writings were censored for political content; indeed, Unamuno was even exiled for his views in 1924. However, intellectuals were allowed artistic freedom, out of which was born the Generation of 1927, a brilliant group of poets and dramatists. The Second Republic was established in 1931 and power shifted in the biennial elections several times between increasingly antagonistic liberal and conservative elements before the Spanish Civil War (1936-39) removed it from power. Unamuno's revision of Niebla in 1935 falls into this time period. When Miguel Azaña Díaz of the left-leaning Popular Front won the elections in 1936 and the country voted a major shift left in the parliament, both soldiers and upper-class, conservative citizens supported by the Catholic hierarchy rose up in a coup. It failed to overthrow the government immediately, instead turning the coup into three years of civil war in which insurgent groups became increasingly unified under the Nationalist head, with General Franco rising in power, and eventually conquering those often fragmented groups that supported the Republic.

General Francisco Franco claimed power in 1939 and established an “authoritarian regime” marked by repression and recession (“Spain”). He also denied women the rights that they had gained under the Second Republic and censored literature more than Primo de Rivera had done. “In a stifling and generally hostile atmosphere, preoccupied by the misery and injustice that surrounded them, Spanish writers had to make hesitant new beginnings under the watchful eye of an all-powerful censorship” (Brown 143). Most authors who had led the brilliant experimental phase of Spanish letters, epitomized by the Generation of 1927, either died in the Spanish Civil War or went into exile, while those who remained were cut off from outside literature as well as from the ability to pursue their own creative interests freely. In the 1950s, the country began to open up gradually. Spain joined the General Assembly of the United Nations and relaxed its strict international trade policies. With these small improvements came social unrest, as social and economic injustices began to outweigh the public’s shrinking fear of civil war. “Novelists, dramatists, and poets of the fifties and sixties ha[d] conceived their task as one of bearing witness to an intolerable reality, or speaking the truth in a world of lies, evasions, silences. The result has been a largely introspective literature of social realism” (Brown 144). Carmen Martín Gaité wrote in this still-repressive environment, and the very commonplace activities that she describes are monuments to the unbearable social repression, particularly for women in the provinces, whose lives were circumscribed by home and church.

When analyzing the role of the narrator in these selected works, a critic can make recourse to several theories of narratology to highlight different aspects of the narratological process. Perhaps the oldest, yet still useful theory is that of formalist critic

Wayne Booth who distinguishes between narrator, character, and implied author by providing groundwork definitions for each in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1961). He posits,

None of our terms for various aspects of the narrator is quite accurate. 'Persona,' 'mask,' and 'narrator' are sometimes used, but they more commonly refer to the speaker in the work who is after all only one of the elements created by the implied author and who may be separated from him by large ironies. 'Narrator' is usually taken to mean the 'I' of a work, but the 'I' is seldom if ever identical with the implied image of the artist. (73)

After describing the confusion of terms regarding who speaks in a work, Booth lays out a framework of terms. To begin, the implied author is a version of the author himself, an often superior projection that the author chooses, consciously or not, to infuse into the work. While many critics have discussed the validity of this concept, Dan Shen, writing in 2011, argues that the perceived contradictions arise from a misunderstanding of Booth's metaphoric use of the word "create," when he says that the author "creates" an implied author. Shen goes on to distinguish the implied author at two points in the life of a text. During the encoding process, the implied author is the "person in the process of writing with a certain 'air' or stance," while in the decoding process, the implied author is the image of the author that the reader infers from the text (81). Booth puts it another way: "The 'implied author' chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man; he is the sum of his own choices," and we need such an expansive concept to address fully the author's role in a work because "we can be satisfied only with a term that is as broad as the work itself but still capable of calling attention to that work as the product of a choosing, evaluating person rather than as a self-existing thing" (Booth 74-75).

While the implied author is an important concept for Booth, he also provides definitions and insight on other narratological terms. The narrator is the voice or perspective through which this implied author channels the events of the story. A narrator can be dramatized as a specific person, who may be involved in the story he relates or completely removed from it, or he may be undramatized, never referring to himself in the course of the narrative. In cases of an undramatized narrator, the narrator usually aligns easily with the implied author. A dramatized narrator falls somewhere within a broad range regarding his distance from and involvement in the story he tells. At one extreme, a single use of the first person dramatizes the narrator of an entire work. On the other end of the spectrum are protagonists who narrate the events of their own story. In between reside the narrators who relate a story in which they did not participate or in which they played a minor or secondary role. One can distinguish between dramatized narrators by labeling them as observers or narrator-agents, going on to clarify the extent to which the narrator acted as agent in the story.

In addition to the dramatization and distance of the narrator, the reader must consider the narrator's knowledge about the story and characters. A narrator might be completely omniscient, relating the thoughts and feelings of all the characters, or he might temporarily demonstrate privileged knowledge of certain characters, or his telling might be completely objective, relating only what could be observed by one human being about others. "Narrators who provide inside views differ in the depth and axis of their plunge. Boccaccio can give inside views, but they are extremely shallow. Jane Austen goes relatively deep morally, but scarcely skims the surface psychologically" (Booth 163). While narrators' focus and level of narration vary from work to work, they can also

fluctuate within a work itself. For example, certain characters may be given more voice, or, as in a classic mystery novel, their thoughts may be withheld until the conclusion. With dramatized narrators, the inclusion of special knowledge about other characters adds another layer to the narrator's role and brings questions of reliability to the fore. For the most part, readers accept that a narrator is trustworthy unless he proves himself otherwise, through providing spurious commentary or withholding critical information. The dramatized narrator who shares privileged knowledge of another character taps into this tension by bringing up questions of how such knowledge was obtained by the character behind the voice.

The narrator's relationship with the reader, the implied author, and other characters can be examined on a scale of distance, ranging from strong identification to essentially complete opposition. "In any reading experience there is an implied dialogue among author, narrator, the other characters, and the reader," and this interaction can be measured "on any axis of value, moral, intellectual, aesthetic, and even physical" (Booth 155). Thus, the narrator might align more or less with the implied author morally, intellectually, or in many other ways. When the narrator is separated drastically from implied author, the opportunity for irony emerges, as the narrator's voice is used to undercut his or her own position. Because the implied author usually seeks to draw the reader into alignment with his point of view, a narrator that is distant from the implied author may be similarly distant from the reader. This distancing is clearly seen in works such as *The Stranger* (Camus), which tells the story of a homicide from the perspective of the murderer. The narrator's distance from the reader grows as the narrator builds up to the murder he commits and his final musings while on death row. In this situation, he or

she can move closer or farther away from the implied reader's stance on one or various axes. The narrator might also align more or less with other characters in the text. This relationship can also change, although it may also remain fixed throughout the work; for example, the story may be told by a narrator who assumes a sense of intellectual supremacy, or he/she may narrate the events years after they occur.

French structuralist Gérard Genette also contributes valuable ideas to narratological analysis in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1980). Genette begins by distinguishing among three aspects of the term "narrative" and applying a different word to each in order to lessen ambiguity. The first layer of "narrative" refers to the "oral or written discourse that undertakes to tell of an event or a series of events" (25). When Genette uses the term "narrative," he means this type. Second, "narrative" might denote the aggregation of events that are the subject of the first type of narrative. Genette calls this aspect of narrative "story." Finally, "narrative" has been used to signify the act of narration: "the event that consists of someone recounting something," rather than the event(s) that this person recounts (26). Genette references this narrative act with the term "narrating." These terms are useful in distinguishing between the various stages or layers involved in a narration, and they allow the critic to investigate how they interact with each other. For example, Genette elaborates on narrative speed and rhythm by a relative comparison of narrative time and story time on a spectrum between ellipsis and descriptive pauses in story time. Between these two extremes fall both scene, which often focuses on dialogue, and summary, which can have a variable tempo, but in which a larger story time is compressed into a smaller narrative time. Thus, the narrator's choices, regarding both what he includes in his narrative and how he places emphasis

through compressing or expanding story time, can reveal aspects of the implied persona behind the voice.

Genette also offers a useful distinction between point of view (which he refers to as “mood”) and the narrator. The difference hinges on the distinction between “the question *who sees?* and the question *who speaks?*” (186). Point of view addresses “who sees,” and includes aspects that Booth included in his analysis of the narrator, such as if the perspective is objective, restricted, or omniscient, that is, an inner or outer point of view. Göran Nieragden supports Genette’s distinction, writing that “the older *point of view* terminology [that of Booth] . . . tends to blur the issue in combining questions about the source of narration at the level of discourse with those about the center of perception/orientation that determines the perspective from which the narrated events are presented” (688). This distinction comes into play particularly when a narrator focalizes the narrating through a character other than himself. Focalization occurs when the narrator maintains his voice but relays the perspective of someone else. “This choice not only bears on the text’s reception; it also is a chief means of characterization” (Nieragden 688), reflecting both on the thing being described and the focalizing perspective. Objective narrating involves no focalization whatsoever; in contrast, restricted or omniscient narrating can express what one or more characters see or think, communicated through the third-person voice of the narrator. A novel can also have double focalization, by which a first-person narrator takes an omniscient approach to other characters in the story. For example, Unamuno the narrator knows even the deepest thoughts of Augusto Pérez.

Genette details the role of the narrator focusing, not on dramatized or undramatized narrators, but rather on how involved in the story the narrator is. A narrator who is outside the level of the main narrative, also known as the diegetic level, is called heterodiegetic and is usually undramatized. A homodiegetic narrator plays a role in the story, and is thus one type of dramatized narrator. The autodiegetic narrator tells his own story, playing both the roles of narrator and protagonist (243). Nieragden further nuances the involvement of the narrator by offering the term “alterodiegetic” to refer to the dramatized narrator who plays no role in the story other than as a witness (686). Genette later defines five functions of the narrator: (1), to narrate the story (narrative function); (2), to organize the story or how the he provides connections, articulations, and the like (directing function); (3), to interact with the narratee (or the recipient of the narrative), which involves his awareness of an audience and his orientation toward the reader (function of communication); (4), to establish his “orientation toward himself . . . an affective relationship, of course, but equally a moral or intellectual one,” which deals with his own response to the story (testimonial function); and (5) to convey the didactic level of narration (ideological function) (255-6). Certain narrators may stand out for their embodiment of one or more of these functions through their interactions with the story, the narrative, the reader, or themselves.

Unlike Genette’s focus on the narrative in *Narrative Discourse*, “Structure, Sign, and Play” (1967, translated 1978) by Jacques Derrida calls into question the metaphysical and linguistic theories that discourse often implies. He does not speak specifically to narratology, but his doubt casts a shadow over any literary criticism, including this thesis. Derrida argues that all theories are structured with a fixed “center” that defines the

boundaries for the other elements of the theory. Furthermore, “it has always been thought that the center, which is by definition unique, constituted that very thing within a structure which while governing the structure, escapes structurality” (279). According to Derrida, we long for centered structure because it provides security for the “play” of all the other elements, but no natural center exists; it would have to be outside the structure of which it forms the center, something fixed beyond the conceptual. “In the absence of a center or origin,” however, “everything bec[omes] discourse—provided we can agree on this word—that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences” (280). This decentering of structure, a rejection of the uniqueness of the core, cannot be complete, because to talk about whatever theory is under scrutiny one must borrow terms and rely on the very history and terminology that one seeks to undermine.

No discourse can rise above others. For example, Derrida addresses the concept of *sign*, a concept that includes both a signifier and a signified, but “as soon as one seeks to demonstrate in this way that there is no . . . privileged signified and that the domain or play of signification henceforth has no limit, one must reject even the concept and word “sign” itself—which is precisely what cannot be done” (281). Thus, rather than dismissing entirely the systems of discourse with which he finds fault, Derrida treads carefully, using the linguistic tools at hand, while clearly acknowledging their flaws, to undermine the fixed nature of structure that gave them birth. This awareness of the fluidity and interdependence of language can inform any discussion, but will come into play in a narratological study through an awareness of the contrived nature of both the

structure of literary criticism and the novels themselves. In acknowledging the limitations of each, this thesis seeks to become a more honest, though still contrived, critique.

Mikhail Bakhtin provides a perspective on the theory of the novel that takes an approach to language more closely paralleling Derrida's ideas than Booth's, because he emphasizes cultural criticism and the dialogic aspects included in every text. In his essay, "Discourse in the Novel," published in translation in 1981, he elaborates on his philosophy of language as it applies to this unique genre. Just as Derrida states that no one voice can denounce a structural history without borrowing from that history, because of the histories that each word brings along, Bakhtin addresses the dialogic quality of the novel as a composite of various voices and linguistic threads, based in a specific cultural setting. Against purely technical analysis of text, Bakhtin argues that the study of language must wed form and content, and that discourse is a social phenomenon with inherent ideology. Furthermore, Bakhtin presents "the novel as a whole" as "a phenomenon multiform in style and variform in speech and voice" (261). He elaborates on five "types of compositional-stylistic unities into which the novelistic whole normally breaks down," including narration and discourse that bears an artistic or literary tone, the more commonplace tone of normal narration, excerpts from semi-literary elements such as letters and journals, the more formal speech involved in stating fact or philosophy, and the everyday lingo of various characters. "The language of a novel is the system of its 'languages,'" and this multiplicity of discourses is one way in which it is a dialogic text (262).

Another type of dialogue forms between the "fixed" aspects of language (the transcribable text) and the social or cultural context that refracts it (xix). Bakhtin calls

this interaction “heteroglossia.” The novel’s thematic material also plays into heteroglossia:

The novel orchestrates all its themes, the totality of the world of objects and ideas depicted and expressed in it, by means of the social diversity of speech types [*raznorečie*] and by the differing individual voices that flourish under such conditions. Authorial speech, the speeches of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters are merely those fundamental compositional unities with whose help heteroglossia [*raznorečie*] can enter the novel; each of them permits a multiplicity of social voices and a wide variety of their links and interrelationships (always more or less dialogized). (263)

Thus, Bakhtin reminds the critic that a novel is basically the unity of diverse voices, the dialogue that develops between them, and that the context in which the words were written is as important to the exchange as the text itself. His assertion forms a foundation for a more cultural strain of narratology. Critic Ansgar Nünning states, “the framework of a cultural narratology is arguably germane to both Bakhtin’s intense concern with social norms and values and also to his perceptive attempts to relate the dialogic structure of novels to the worldviews and ideologies of the societies from which they originated” (358). Both Bakhtin and theories of cultural narratology serve as reminders that the text is not aloof from the culture in which it was born: it both draws from and contributes to the larger cultural dialogue around it. Nünning defines applied cultural narratology as using narratology’s toolkit “to the service of a cultural analysis of narrative fictions” (356). He continues, “such an approach can arguably shed light on both the semantic potential of narrative forms and the changing functions that narrative strategies have fulfilled” (356). Maintaining a cultural awareness as part of this narratological study will allow for analysis not just of narrative texts but also their unique relationships to a changing Spanish culture.

Taking into account the historical and literary backdrop of each novel, then, this study will consider narratological aspects in *La de Bringas*, by Benito Pérez Galdós, *Niebla*, by Miguel de Unamuno, and *Entre visillos*, by Carmen Martín Gaité. The analysis will utilize the theories of Booth, Genette, Derrida, and Bakhtin, but will focus on the role of the narrator in each novel. Chapter 2 will address *La de Bringas*. Galdós presents this narrative through a sly, homodiegetic narrator who seems to take an ironic inside-look at various characters, but who eventually reveals his own complicity in the very situations he mocks. Chapter 3 focuses on *Niebla*, in which Unamuno the narrator acts as god to his characters and takes a deeply omniscient stance with the protagonist while maintaining his tone of superiority until coming face to face with his fictive creation. Chapter 4 looks at *Entre visillos*, a work that combines the social realism typical in Spain at the time with a unique narrative style that fluctuates among first- and third- person narrating, including some intercalated passages. Finally, chapter 5 will conclude by attempting to draw connections between the works based on the analysis in the previous chapters. Each narrator is different, sometimes more or less associated with the implied author. Each dialogues with the unique cultural setting of the story, both reflecting and critiquing, both influenced by it and acting upon it. Examining samples of the interactions between narrator, text, and society in Spanish literature produced during a particularly turbulent period in Spain's history (1880s through 1950s), as well as the narrator's role as the dominant voice, refracts this complex relationship between literature and society for the reader to decode. Without an understanding of the voice that communicates the narrative, the reader cannot fully grasp the text's implicit meaning, and she or he could miss the point entirely.

CHAPTER TWO

Irony and Characterization in *La de Bringas*

“Imagen de la vida es la novela, y el arte de componerla estriba en reproducir los caracteres humanos, las pasiones, las debilidades, . . . todo lo espiritual y lo físico que nos constituye y nos rodea, y el lenguaje, que es la marca de raza.” Benito Pérez Galdós made the above remark upon his induction into the Real Academia Española in 1897 (Galdós 1897). His literary works achieve the verisimilitude of which he speaks by approaching the world through individuals. He paints his characters with a realist’s intensity, making use of “atmospheric perspective,” to borrow a term from the visual arts. Galdós develops each character with different levels of detail, dictated by the plot and narrator, and his representation of a character can change drastically from one novel to another. Some characters serve as unmediated symbols, whereas others play the double role of ironic caricatures and individuals with realistic depth.

La de Bringas, published in 1884, takes Rosalía de Bringas, a flat character in *Tormento* (also published in 1884), and makes her a three-dimensional individual deserving of her title role. To create a work simultaneously believable and biting, Galdós weaves irony into the fabric of the narration throughout *La de Bringas*. Rather than looking at the world objectively, he describes it from the perspective of a homodiegetic narrator. This narrative voice reveals himself through his representations of other characters, even subverting his own authoritative claims and ironizing himself through his critique of others. Galdós creates a complex work that satirizes a larger social sphere through a ubiquitous and cutting irony that he applies to specific characters, directly or

indirectly satirizing Rosalía de Bringas, Francisco de Bringas, lesser characters, and even the narrator himself, often ironizing multiple characters at a time.

Irony is a complex technique with multiple applications and nuances. In its simplest form, it deals with double-meanings or incongruencies; often, its real message contradicts its superficial intention. In order to work, irony requires the complicity and participation of the reader (or listener) to interpret the ironic content (Gutiérrez Cham 185). All narratives bear an implicit irony in the superiority and voyeurism they allow the reader over the characters, reflecting the ironic perspective, which Michael Nimetz describes as “emotional anesthetic”. In his own words, “Although irony is a part of life, the ironic attitude is one of detachment from it. One stands back, and his emotions become disengaged. He is no longer at the mercy of people or events but feels superior to them” (78). Ironically, even the superiority and emotional distance that comprise the ironic perspective can be ironized. Because the reader automatically assumes this perspective, he/she runs the risk of perceiving more distance between situation and self than actually exists. Gutiérrez Cham explains: “al seguir este juego, a fuerza de contemplar las incongruencias corremos también el riesgo de volvernos incongruentes” (200). The reader, too, may fall victim to the author’s irony.

Beyond the implicit irony found in all narratives, authors utilize various explicit techniques, among which are dramatic irony and referential irony. Dramatic irony is related to implicit irony in that it accentuates the ironic perspective of the reader. It occurs when the reader becomes aware of some narrative “secret” of which the characters are ignorant (Gutiérrez Cham 199). Thus, textual clues to the future, like flippant comments that later have profound implications, alert the reader to what is coming and

reinforce his/her sense of superiority. Referential irony compares very unequal things. Nimetz explains, “It involves an outrageously inappropriate comparison, either explicit or implicit,” which confers an unmerited value on the lesser subject, thus subtly emphasizing its lack of equality (18). When one compares a dandelion to a rose, one is not actually complementing the dandelion, because the comparison only draws our attention to the disparity between the two. When the reader reads an ironic text as sincerity, he/she is ironized as well as the subject. Any form of irony can be turned against the reader as well as the character, whether the reader fails to understand the ironic overtones of a text or assumes too much superiority over a text.

In *La de Bringas*, the anonymous narrator adds little to plot development but is key to its evolution of irony. He is the fictitious author who decided to write the story, and his attitudes about events and people guide the narrative and the readers’ perception of events and characters in unobtrusive but powerful ways. He dramatizes himself with his first utterance, but his involvement on the diegetic plane remains unclear for several chapters. At first, he seems to be a heterodiegetic or alterodiegetic narrator, according to the definitions provided by Genette and Nieragden, and his actions as a character are often effaced by his discourse as narrator. As a character in the story with his own personality, however, he does not align with the projection of Galdós in the narrative. This distance between what Booth called the implied author and the narrator creates the opportunity for irony wherever the narrator and implied author disagree. When the narrator enters the narrative, he generally comments or ironizes rather than acts, and Galdós uses the narrator’s discourse and criticism to highlight his hypocritical nature.

In addition to ironizing himself through his critique of others, the narrator undermines his discourse through unreliability. As a character in the story, the narrator is entitled to what Booth terms an “objective narration”: one that conveys what a single person could observe about others, without any special insights. This narrator, however, provides inside views into other characters, particularly into Rosalía de Bringas. He frequently focalizes through her, which creates a double focalization according to Genette. While the narrator breezes over the conflict between his humanity and his omniscience, this disconnect creates an essential flaw in his trustworthiness. He cleverly removes himself from the narration to portray the deepest and most meandering of Rosalía’s thoughts, yet he also falls asleep during a *tertulia* and therefore loses that part of the story. Manuel de Pez is speaking, which the narrator describes as having a narcotic effect on his nerves (p. 185; ch. 27). After narrating the scene and Pez’s speech with increasing ellipses, he ends mid-sentence: “quisiera Dios . . . ,” followed by a paragraph break. He picks up the narrative line, “No sé el tiempo que transcurrió entre aquel segundo *quisiera* y un discreto golpecito que me dio doña Cándida en la rodilla” (187). He has lost not only the end of Pez’s bluster but also someone else’s tragic news. It is unclear just how much our narrator misses due to human moments such as these. Furthermore, he consciously withholds information about himself from the reader, which when revealed undercuts the initial interpretation of his discourse.

The narrator begins his narrative with an entire chapter dedicated to a highly ironic descriptive passage. He assumes his ironic tone with his first sentence “Era aquello . . . ¿cómo lo diré yo? . . . , un gallardo artificio” (p. 53; ch. 1). The aside marks his existence as a subjective narrator, and so his narrative begins to reveal the personality

behind it. In the first chapter, he writes three long paragraphs describing this “gallardo artificio” and other aspects of the cenotaph as if he were describing a masterful funereal monument, albeit a clichéd one. However, the last sentence of the chapter reveals its true nature: an artwork composed of hair (56), crafted by the inexpert hands of don Francisco de Bringas. The narrator chooses to present this hair artwork of a cemetery scene as if it were grandiose and impressive, thus comparing the reality to the impression his description first gives the reader. When the narrator reveals the actual caliber of the hair artwork, he shocks the reader, thereby emphasizing its actual smallness and crudeness. The sarcastic tone of the narrator begins in the opening sentence and grows throughout the chapter, but the barbed commentaries do not become clear until he shares the vital piece of information. The use of diminutives, such as “caballerito,” superlatives, like “elegantísima,” and appalling descriptions, like the willows that “se iban a llorar a moco y baba camino del horizonte,” point to the narrative irony by describing a kitsch piece of popular art in such overblown terms. When he finally explains the type of work he has been describing, the narrator rises to his ironic zenith in his insincere encomiums of the artist, attacking him with false praise: “demostraba en él habilidad benedictina, una limpieza de manos y una seguridad de vista que rayaban en lo maravilloso, si no un poquito más allá” (56). The combination of exaggerated adulation, diminutives, and other burlesque descriptions presents a highly ironic scene that reflects the personality of the one who narrated it. Bakhtin talks about heteroglossia [*raznorečie*] as “*another’s speech in another’s language*, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way” (324); in this case, the narrator borrows a laudatory tone in order to refract his thoughts with irony about a truly dreadful piece of popular “art.”

Galdós's narrator presents himself at times as omniscient because of his inside knowledge about other characters, but at other times he expresses his subjectivity through his doubts, absences, and opinionated discourse. Juaristi describes his point of view as that of "un pequeño dios" (Juaristi 278), an assumed role that creates a certain distance between him and the other characters, marked by an attitude of superiority in the narrating. He rarely addresses his own role in the narrative, but acts occasionally on the diegetic plane. His first appearance as a character occurs in chapter 3, when he and Pez lose their way in the labyrinth of the royal palace. In chapter 5 he reveals a connection with Máximo Manso (a character from another Galdós novel), from whom he hears about doña Cándida, but our official introduction is delayed until chapter 6, which he begins, "Pero antes de seguir, quiero quitar de esta relación el estorbo de mi personalidad" (75). He goes on to relate that he had sold some land in Riofrío without paying the required taxes; however, with the help of Pez, Francisco, and a healthy dose of diminutives applied to his "asunto," he succeeds in wrapping up the entire situation in a single paragraph. Even so, what is small in space is large in personality, and we learn various things about him through this single paragraph. For example, he gives and receives favors, and the strict demands of the law do not perturb him, provided political connections can smooth out the situation. Moreover, the narrator admits to removing himself forcefully from the narrative—causing the reader to wonder if he has gone so far as to change certain events to ensure his perceived distance, or what role he actually plays in the lives of the Bringas. As god of the narrative, he clearly has the prerogative to efface his part in the story. As a character, he shows himself worldly-wise and willing to

hide his own actions in the novel in order to maintain the appearance of superiority and increase his power of manipulation without calling attention to his motivations.

Removing himself from the action, the narrator uses his position largely to ironize other characters, inadvertently ironizing himself in the process. This irony is possible because he maintains an ironic perspective with his attitude of supremacy, even though he lacks any real superiority over those he critiques. He distains the artwork in hair that Francisco finds so admirable, he mocks Rosalía's presumption, and he even falls asleep while Manuel de Pez sermonizes in chapter 27. This last act particularly reflects on him due to the perceived similarities between Pez and the narrator: Both are politicians who know how to work the system, go to the same *tertulias*, and even form adulterous relations with the same woman. Juaristi assesses our narrator's actions thus: "Todo parece indicar que nos encontramos ante un ejemplar de esa raza 'pisciforme'" (277). Falling asleep in the middle of Pez's speech shows the narrator's sense of superiority and ironic perspective, even as it ironizes Pez, of whom the narrator says, "hallándose presente el señor de Pez, ningún otro mortal podía atreverse a levantar el gallo en una conversación de política o sobre cualquier asunto de sustancia" (p.185; ch. 27), yet whose audience cannot stay awake to hear his harangues. The passage also ironizes the "fish-like" narrator through referential irony, because in whatever respects he distains Pez, he is in a sense pointing out his own flaws.

While the narrator demonstrates the narrowness of his perspective when he actively comments on other characters, he takes on a more trustworthy appearance when he narrates through dialogue and the free indirect style. In dialogue, he transcribes the words said by others in a supposedly faithful manner, although he maintains the ability to

choose and change them to fit his own narrative aims. By making use of different types of “compositional-stylistic unities” addressed by Bakhtin (262), he presents the information as though it came from another voice, thus also falling into Bakhtin’s concept of “*double-voiced discourse*” in that he expresses his own perspective and another character’s through a single text (324). However, due to his evident unreliability in other respects, the reader suspects that even quoted texts are seated in his own social ideology rather than other characters’ sentiments. The free indirect style, like dialogue, almost completely removes his voice from the narrative, replacing it with the thoughts of another character, often Rosalía, which he communicates in the third person. This stance gives him the opportunity to comment on the situation or employ irony through someone else’s voice. Readers feel his presence, though more subtly. In chapter 29, for example, Rosalía cannot sleep because of her fear about Bringas’ discovering that the candlesticks are gone (because she has pawned them). She searches for a method of escape: “el medio de evitar esto . . . el señor de Pez, su ideal . . . ¡Oh, qué hombre tan extraordinario y fascinador!” (195). The narrator makes it quite clear that he does not share Rosalía’s opinion of Pez, but he communicates her thoughts without offering commentary. He does not need to state his opposition directly for the reader to interpret Rosalía’s thoughts ironically. By channeling Rosalía’s perspective of Pez, he ironizes the man subtly, merely allowing the readers to remember his perspective in chapter 27 and draw their own conclusions about the disparity between what he writes and what he thinks. This indirect narrative also serves to ironize Rosalía, for holding such an exalted opinion of Pez against the “better judgment” of the narrator.

The final chapter provides the key for understanding our narrator and interpreting his discourse. In it, he reveals his support for the revolutionary government, and indeed his apparently high rank in it. He explains, “mi suerte o mi desgracia quiso que fuese yo el designado por la Junta para custodiar el coloso y administrar todo lo que había pertenecido a la Corona” (302). Throughout the narration, he has presented the revolution through the perspective of Pez, Francisco, and those around him, who have frequently been supporters of the crown. Only now that the revolutionaries have won the “Glorious Revolution” that ousted Isabel II from her throne does he acknowledge his own political stance. As in chapter 1, in which the narrator withholds the nature of the hair artwork until the end of his description, his revelation at the very end of the novel forces the reader to reassess everything that has already happened with a new perspective. By not acknowledging his own stance until the end of the chapter, the narrator allows the reader to assume a sense of solidarity or agreement when he narrates Francisco’s fear of political change, for example. Knowing that the narrator has been narrating from the opposite side of the political spectrum from his diegetic subjects, the reader gains an ironic perspective on the entire narrative. Moreover, his dishonesty on this count reasserts his moral ambiguity and lack of reliability as a narrator.

As new administrator of the palace, the narrator has the opportunity to hear the pleas of current residents to keep their apartments in the “*Palacio de la Nación*”. His response to one of these requests, to allow the widow of García Grande to stay simply to avoid having to read through her hefty box of recommendations, emphasizes yet again his drive for ease over correctness. While Francisco has no desire to stay in the palace, Pez, the narrator notes, does not seem very troubled by the change in government. The

narrator pokes fun at him, saying, “¡Y qué feliz casualidad! Casi todos los individuos que compusieron la Junta eran amigos suyos. Algunos tenían con él parentesco, es decir, que eran algo Peces” (304). This light jibe serves to ironize the narrator still more, since in the next sentence he affirms that he is one of Pez’s friends (and he has shown himself to be *pisciforme*, though he does not openly acknowledge it). This passage further serves to bring into question the reliability of the new government, as being primarily shaped by figures such as Pez and the narrator. Rosalía also seeks to benefit from the narrator’s new position, both before and after moving from the palace. Indeed, the final paragraph implies that she had narrated many of her struggles to the narrator, and that, sometime before this final narrated interview, they had been lovers. The narrator, at first appearing almost heterodiegetic, and later alterodiegetic, reveals in his final words a close, if temporary, tie to the protagonist, leaving the reader to wonder when the intimacy occurred and what else he has deemed nonessential, and therefore omitted from his tale.

With the exception of the narrator himself, who shares some part of the irony of everyone, Rosalía de Bringas is both the most developed and the most ironized character. In various portions of the novel, the narrator withholds his own opinions and allows Rosalía’s voice to come to the fore, through conversations, thoughts communicated in the first person, or through the free indirect style. When she does not express her condition directly, the narrator’s comments serve to elucidate it. The first eight chapters do not focus on the title character, but they provide the reader with a psychological and ironic sketch of her. The first time he mentions her, the narrator contrasts her perspective regarding Paquito’s job with that of her husband thus:

Aunque en el engréido meollo de Rosalía de Bringas se había incrustado la idea de que la credencial aquella no era favor, sino cumplimiento de un

deber del Estado para con los españolitos precoces, estaba agradecidísima a la diligencia con que Pez hizo entender y cumplir a la patria sus obligaciones. (p. 57-8; ch. 2)

This introduction already begins to mark Rosalía's conceit and parasitic social role, and it lays a foundation for the development of Pez as a character and the relationship that develops between the two. Other early appearances highlighting her attitude toward the social hierarchy continue to emphasize her character flaws.

A thoroughly human character, Rosalía lies at the center of the metaphoric and ironic web that Galdós weaves throughout the narration. Critic Diane Urey highlights this function, saying, "Rosalía is a conjunction of all the ironic intertextualities in her novel; the construct of her character cannot be isolated from the novel's complex of literary, cultural, and symbolic codes" (28). One cannot understand Rosalía apart from her ironic symbolism, nor can the symbolic current of the narrative be understood without her, because she is the axis around which all the threads of irony and metaphor revolve—she connects the simple ironies to the symbolism, and she brings the ironies of the text into the world of the reader by embodying metaphoric codes that find their basis in Galdós's own society. Both explicitly and metaphorically, Rosalía is a negative character—the way she is presented, the ironic narrative, and her own actions create an image that distances her from the reader. While it is more difficult to relate individually to a negative character, such as Rosalía, one can relate her to larger social trends in order to draw satiric connections implicit in the text. "The semes of vanity, presumption, and ignorance which traverse her portrait reflect on her society and provide the reader with an indirect comment on his own world" (Urey 38). Social irony, while providing a way for

Galdós to critique contemporary society, is only one of the ways that Rosalía ironically represents something larger than herself.

Rosalía also plays a central role in the extensive metaphor that connects the Bringas family ironically to the royal family. The Bringases have named the rooms of their house after famous royal apartments (ch. 5), and the narrator continues to refer to the rooms by these appellations throughout the text. Francisco de Bringas, senior and junior, share their name with king consort Francisco de Asís; according to legend, the king was as blind to his wife's indiscretions as the elder Bringas is. Alfonso XII finds a namesake in Alfonsín, and as the novel was composed at the end of Alfonso's reign, one can imagine the social commentary related to descriptions of the boy, who is described rather as a child-terror, "un hábil destructor de cuanto caía en sus manos" (p. 251; ch. 40). At one point, he shares a "secret" with his mother that is hardly complementary to either of them: "Dice papá que yo salgo a ti, que soy un loco" (255).

Isabelita clearly bears the name of the queen, but it is Rosalía who is compared to Isabel II most ironically, as seen in the narrator's address of Rosalía's dress and vanity. In chapter 8, for example, she dresses royally for the Good Friday ceremonies: "se personó en la regia morada, juzgando que era indispensable su presencia" (84). In her final appearance in the novel, the narrator describes her as "serena y un tanto majestuosa" (305). Both royal references play on referential irony, because Rosalía follows the trend of the bourgeois lower class in seeking to appear richer and more important than she really is; to liken herself to the queen, even a queen who is dethroned in the course of the narration, underlines Rosalía's pretension. Her indiscriminate and bourgeois approbation of anything at *Sobrino Hermanos* and of her idol Milagros, Marchioness of Tellería,

intensifies the irony (cfr. Gold 56). In addition to ironizing Rosalía, this metaphor can serve to comment on the monarchy and socio-political situation of Galdós's time.

Bakhtin's heteroglossia reminds us not only of the multiple voices within a text, but also that a text cannot be separated from the social context that it refracts. At the time of writing, Galdós had lived through the Glorious Revolution, six years of political mayhem, and several more of Alfonso XII's weak monarchy.

Beyond her comparison to Isabel II, Rosalía symbolizes Spain at the moment of the Revolution of 1868. The royal analogy, while prevalent, lacks the same force of application at the end of the narrative. Rosalía, like the queen, finds herself literally exiled from her home in the palace in the final chapter. However, the queen loses her position of power at the point in which Rosalía completes "aquella mudanza moral" (p. 305; ch. 50), coming into her own at the height of serene majesty. The novel focuses on the first steps and struggles of this moral shift, which reflect the concurrent development of the political revolution. The narrator meticulously marks the months in which the narrative takes place, providing various bulletins on the exile of military leaders, the development of the revolution, and opinions about these events from the voices of Pez, Francisco, and Paquito Bringas. Like the queen, Rosalía experiences growing stress and the threat of the complete breakdown of her current situation in the summer of 1868. While experiencing a material breakdown in the loss of her palace apartment, however, unlike Isabel II, she gains personal power and assurance through her trials. She even displays "pisciforme" characteristics by the end: she knows how to use the monarchic rule to her benefit, for example to explain how she got a new shawl, yet she can also flourish in revolutionary Spain. She succeeds in freeing herself from both Francisco's

stinginess and traditional morality's rigidity in order to satisfy her desire for luxury. However, she cannot fully remove herself from her husband's decisions, and her removal from the palace is due to his unwillingness to work with the revolutionary government. Furthermore, her passion to possess and appear wealthy can be counterproductive, and it seems an omen that the Glorious Revolution, which both fostered and reflects Rosalía's personal revolution, quickly disintegrated and left little lasting effect on Spain (Gold 54).

Like Rosalía, Francisco de Bringas bears symbolic ties to the revolution. The narrator does not develop Francisco's character as much as he does Rosalía's, allowing him to function primarily as her husband-figure and defining him by a few idiosyncrasies. He has an obsession with money and with his cenotaph of hair; he worries disproportionately about things of secondary importance while remaining blind to the real problems in his life. His physical infirmity reflects what Juaristi labels as his "metaphysical and moral blindness" to his wife's actions (282). The context of Rosalía's metaphoric connection to the Revolution adds another layer to the irony of Francisco's blindness. Francisco hates the mere idea of a revolution and the collapse of the familiar monarchy, but he cannot see how dire the situation is at either the national or the domestic level of his life. Rosalía's journey from his submissive and subservient "esclava doméstica" to ruler and queen of the house is also the collapse of the husband's monarchy. When he finally sees the overthrow of the government, he is left "más muerto que vivo" (p. 295; ch. 48), regressing into a depressed puerility. One can only imagine his response had he discovered his blindness about Rosalía! Thus, while Rosalía ironically represents Isabel II in her social and sexual liberation, Francisco, as the

overthrown king, is tied to the political figurehead who loses power in the Revolution, making his blindness function as a political symbol, as well.

On a superficial plane, Bringas's meticulous creation of the cenotaph piece is the cause of his blindness. It is a masterpiece in miniature: a drawing "de pelo o en pelo" comprised entirely of clichéd imagery to memorialize Pez's deceased daughter (p. 56; ch. 1). This piece acts on both literal and symbolic planes in the novel, and it is key to a complete understanding of Francisco. He begins it out of a penurious desire to cancel his debt to Pez while spending as little as possible, but his project quickly becomes his obsession. In the first chapter, the narrator presages this disproportionate obsession with his sweeping description of the kitschy creation. The complements that Francisco receives about the work also act as foreshadowing: "¡Qué bonniíito, qué preciooso . . . ! ¡Alabaaado Dios . . . , qué dedos de ángel! Don Francisco, se va usted a quedar ciego . . . " (p. 84; ch. 8, ellipses in the original text). Besides the irony of praise conveyed through a disparaging narrator—who mocks the work, Francisco, and the girls who utter such elongated adjectives—the speakers partake in dramatic irony by involuntarily alluding to the future blindness of Francisco.

The narrator also describes Francisco in religious terms. In the first chapter, he takes the opportunity of mocking him in the comment, "demostraba en él habilidad benedictina, una limpieza de manos y una seguridad de vista que rayaban en lo maravilloso, si no un poquito más allá" (56). By highlighting Francisco's "benedictine ability" in a chapter that oozes sarcasm about the piece itself, the narrator underlines Francisco's lack of skill through referential irony. His derisive tone crystalizes when he suggests that this ability extends even a little beyond the marvelous. The narrator

maintains the religious thread of his descriptions when he exclaims that Francisco could even make a rosary out of grains of sand: “¡Qué diablo de hombre! Habría sido capaz de hacer un rosario de granos de arena, si se pone a ello, o de reproducir la catedral de Toledo en una cáscara de avellana” (p. 64; ch. 3). Yet again, the narrator’s exaggerated praise acts ironically within his religious references. This phenomenon is not confined to the work of hair, but rather seems to be tied to Francisco himself. Immediately following the girls’ wild praises, the narrator comments, “Don Francisco, santificador de las fiestas, asistió de gran etiqueta, con su cruz y todo, a la solemnidad religiosa en la capilla” (84). As a sanctifying influence on festive gatherings, he is in his element for the Good Friday ceremonies held at the palace. Galdós has been viewed as anticlerical, and depictions of clergy in his works tend to be negative (Lida 1194). In this case, the narrator addresses religion and its formalized institutions and rituals as irreverently as anything else, treating it as yet another source of ironic symbolism. Juaristi comments thus: “los símbolos religiosos son objeto de una inversión sacrílega si bien lo más sacrílego, a fin de cuentas, sigue siendo el humillante rito del Lavatorio a que la Reina somete a los mendigos” (Juaristi 286). When religion becomes sacrilege and the queen’s “humility” the worst offender, Francisco cannot escape irony by association.

In addition to ironic references to Catholicism, the narrator represents Francisco as pertaining to an inverted religion: that of mammon. “La economía doméstica . . . era la segunda religión de Bringas” (p. 144; ch. 19), and his economic piety causes problems for Rosalía throughout the novel. We perceive Francisco primarily through Rosalía’s perspective, with ironic undercurrents from the narrator, and her perspective on his economy fluctuates according to her financial straits. In chapter 9, his thrift is

“prudencia” (92), but by chapter 16 the tone has changed: “Ante todo, no se cansaría de repetir que era un ángel, un ser de perfección . . . Pero esto no quitaba que fuera muy tacaño y que la tuviese sujeta a un mal traer, deslucida y olvidada” (126). Through the free indirect style, Rosalía begins by lauding him in religious terms, a necessary precursor to her complaints about his eternal dedication to the idol of savings. The difference between the simple description of chapter 9 and the hypocritical passion behind chapter 16 ironizes Rosalía’s capriciousness more than Francisco’s miserly tendencies, but he does not escape irony’s sting, and it touches him increasingly as the novel progresses. When he falls ill for the first time, Francisco constantly rebukes Rosalía for unnecessary expenditures, and he gives thanks that “no me traiga acá un oculista, que si lo llega a traer, apaga y vámonos. Dios querrá no sea preciso . . . Ayer habló de tomar baños. Tiemblo en pensarlo” (p. 158; cap.22; ellipse present in the original text). It seems that money is the epicenter for all of his reprimands, prayers, desires, and fears—in short, for his life. Furthermore, the narrator ironizes his dedication through stark contrast with Rosalía’s obsession with luxury. They both collect: Francisco has his coffer and Rosalía her chests of clothes. Thus, when one condemns the other, he or she condemns a different form of his or her own weakness. The narrator satirizes Rosalía for her financial predicaments, but he also criticizes “the economist” through comparison, pitting religion that consists of paper notes against a religion of silk.

The narrator does not restrain himself to satirizing the Bringases, and his criticism of don Manuel María José de Pez is particularly ironic. Pez, like Rosalía and other characters present in *La de Bringas*, has a longer galdosian history than pertains to this study. In this novel, his relationship with Rosalía and his *pisciforme* speech and

maneuvering form the basis of his role. He first appears in chapter 2, in connection to that “bella obra de arte” (p. 55; ch. 1), which Francisco begins as a frugal way to express his gratitude for Pez providing Paquito with a job. The narrator also mentions Pez’s role in extracting him from his own sticky situation when he seeks to “remove himself from the relation” in chapter 6, calling him “el arreglador de todas las cosas, el recomendador sempiterno, el hombre de los volantitos y de las notitas” (75). Even in gratitude, the narrator hyperbolizes and diminutizes his praise. He also continues to include Pez’s political suavity in the narration. When Francisco accuses him of not being indignant enough at the change of government, “éste, con tres maneras para que fueran sentido, se defendía enaltecendo la teoría de los hechos consumidos, que son la clave de la Política y de la Historia”. Moreover, his network of friends extends to many in the revolutionary government, as the narrator points out in chapter 50. Clearly, Pez has built up enough connections to keep him afloat through the political chaos, and any earlier concern he expressed on the issue was more likely for Bringas’s sake than his own.

The narrator also shares Rosalía’s changing opinion of Pez through her perspective, making Rosalía’s relationship with Pez crucial to the latter’s character development. After Francisco’s dedication to creating a thank-you gift robs Pez of their daily chats and thus throws him more often into the company of Rosalía, the two form a bond of marital discontent. As Rosalía fondly remembers details of his person and character in the free indirect style, she enumerates, “aquellos modales finos y aquel hablar pomposo, diciendo las cosas de dos o tres maneras para que fueran mejor comprendidas . . . Ni una sola vez, siempre que le decía algo, dejaba de emplear alguna frase de sentido ingenioso y un poco doble” (p. 172; ch. 25). Rosalía easily picks up on

his double discourse as it pertains to complementing her person. Later, when she has “sold herself” to him only to discover his own insolvency, she determines to “fish” for more substantial conquests in the future. “Hacía propósito de no volver a pescar alimañas (*vermin*) de tan poca sustancia, y se figuraba estar tendiendo sus redes en mares anchos y batidos, por cuyas aguas cruzaban gallardos tiburones, pomposos ballenatos y peces de verdadero fuste” (pp. 295-6; ch. 48). She wants no more to do with simple *peces*, but rather seeks the great sharks and whales of the social sea. The irony of her goal plays once again on Pez’s name and emphasizes the nautical theme surrounding the character, as the narrator also plays with the fish connection when he affirms Pez’s slippery, nuanced speech and ironizes him for his fish-like social maneuvering. Of course, the narrator’s superiority toward Pez’s hypocrisy and political bluff proves completely hypocritical, as well, as he shows himself to be *pisciforme* in his politics as well as his relations with Rosalía.

Doña Cándida and Milagros de Tellería exemplify Galdós’s array of ironic side characters in this work. As with the Bringas family, their names become cutting commentaries as the characters fail to live up to them, or embody them in negative ways. Having alluded to doña Cándida’s library earlier, the narrator introduces her in chapter 6, explaining that, financially, she lives in the fading afterglow of another life. Unable to pay her landlord, Cándida faces dire straits, but the queen steps in to pay her debt and offers her an apartment in the palace. Cándida, however, tells the story differently: “ ‘Me he metido en ese cuchitril por complacer a Su Majestad y estar cerca de ella, mientras me arreglan las piezas de la terraza . . . ¡Ay, qué posma de arquitecto! . . . Le voy a calentar las orejas . . . ’ ” (76). Knowing our narrator, he would probably mock her dissimulation

about her poverty in any case, but her name—meaning *candid* or *honest*—heightens the effect through referential irony. Milagros, on the other hand, seems to embody her name unexpectedly, in that she maintains her luxurious lifestyle mainly by miracle. Rosalía fairly worships her, and the narrator plays with religious terminology in describing her (see ch. 9). In one of the most directly ironic plays on Milagros’s name, the narrator expounds on this faith of Rosalía: “Confiaba tanto en las peregrinas dotes de Milagros, que decía para sí: «No sé cómo será, pero ella saldrá del paso»” (p. 143; ch. 19), providing another example both of religiously related irony and of double discourse, as it is clear that the narrator does not share Rosalía’s rose-colored perspective. In fact, Milagros suffers financially just as do doña Cándida and Rosalía. By chapter 31, she is borrowing from Rosalía what Rosalía borrows from her husband’s savings. While Milagros first seems to be merely Rosalía’s well-to-do idol, her name becomes the humorous figurehead of her way of life when her financial situation comes to light.

One particular conversation between Rosalía and Milagros gains an ironic edge when the narrator presents it as if it were the script of a play. Merely by transposing their conversation thus, he comments on the disparity between reality and the appearance that these two seek so avidly. Placing the women in the roles of actors, he seemingly removes his voice from the narration while still allowing himself space to heighten the irony. He prefaces the exchange by highlighting its “value” as a representative survey of clothing terminology, writing, “Estos consejos no tenían término, y si se tomara acta de ellos ofrecerían un curioso registro enciclopédico de esta pasión mujeril” (94). His use of the imperfect tense when referring to the women’s activities emphasizes the repetitive and ongoing nature of this conversation, which is underlined by its scripted format; they

could have presented it as many times as they chose. After an amused remark regarding the abundance of French terms in their jargon, he launches into theatrical representation:

ROSALÍA.—(*Mirando un figurín.*) Si he de decir la verdad, yo no entiendo esto. No sé cómo se han de unir atrás los faldones de la *casaca de guardia francesa*.

MILAGROS.—(*Con cierto aturdimiento, al cual se sobrepone poco a poco su gran juicio.*) Dejemos a un lado los figurines. Seguirlos servilmente lleva a lo afectado y *estrepitoso*. (95)

With each line, the narrator gives stage cues for the women, some of which are straightforward, while others take on an ironic tone. Rosalía he describes merely as looking at a figurine. Milagros, on the other hand, begins a little bewilderedly, but her “grand judgment” must triumph by the end of the line. The narrator’s cues are less objective than standard stage directions, and their singularity combines with the unprecedented theatrical format and the narrator’s exaggerated praise to ironize both the particular women and the passion they espouse. Their whole life becomes merely a play in which they assume roles, further underscoring the hypocrisy of their existence.

In the midst of this heavily ironized cast of characters, one stands out for failing to receive the cutting edge of the narrator’s pen. Refugio Sánchez Emperador is a different species from the normal citizen of Madrid as portrayed in *La de Bringas*, and the narrator treats her differently. He paints her in her disarrayed apartment, hardly dressed and fickle-minded, but he treats her as an equal rather than taking the tone of superiority that characterizes his depictions of other characters. He includes some religious language that, along with her name, draws a lightly ironic connection, but even here his words do not bite (cfr. Juaristi 288-290, 292). Rosalía expresses her own sense of superiority over her husband’s “morally loose” cousin; however, she ultimately finds herself forced to seek out Refugio as a supplicant, begging for refuge from financial calamity. Several

times in their conversation (ch. 45-48), Rosalía's hauteur is shared through what she *would have* said: “«¿Pero cuántos caballeros conoces tú, grandísimo apunte? —le habría dicho Rosalía, si hubiera estado en situación de ser severa—»” (p. 287; ch. 47).

However, her disdain only ironizes herself, because the poverty and lack of character for which she derides Refugio reflect her own moral failings caused by her inordinate purchasing and lending, and her relations with Pez. The narrator never offers an inside perspective on Refugio, but her actions, described by him, affirm Rosalía's thought, “Está jugando conmigo como un gato con una bola de papel” (288). He portrays Refugio as playing with Rosalía rather maliciously, mocking her, changing her mind, and putting her off until Rosalía helps her dress and does her hair, a marked role reversal from their previous interactions in *Tormento*. While this “game” shows a negative trait in Refugio, the narrator does not ridicule her for pettiness or hypocrisy. Rather, he portrays her as aware of her superior position and power over Rosalía. When the narrator places himself over other characters, he is brought low by his hypocrisy, but Refugio is not. She has faults, but she acknowledges them, as with her failure as a businesswoman in Madrid society.

As the only non-ironized character, Refugio also bears a special link to the implied author. In her harangue on the *madrileño* fashion of covering poverty with the appearance of luxury, she speaks directly to what Galdós seems to say with the entire novel. “¡Ay!, qué Madrid éste, todo apariencia” (p. 283; ch. 46). In addition to her plain speech, she refers multiple times to an unnamed gentleman of her acquaintance. After making the above comment, she continues, “Dice un caballero que yo conozco, que esto es un Carnaval de todos los días, en que los pobres se visten de ricos” (p. 283).

Refugio pinpoints the theme of reality and appearance in the novel; furthermore, critics have variously posited the identity of the “caballero que yo conozco” as the narrator, or even Galdós himself as the implied author. She also references the carnival aspects of society, an idea that Bakhtin uses in his criticism. He refers to the carnivalesque as an inversion of social order, “eliminating castes and upending hierarchies to renew humans for truly human relations” (Johnson 90). Here, Madrid parodies the carnival, hiding its poverty under the guise of affluence—a guise which fools only those who, like Golfín, the eye specialist, are foreigners to Madrid and “un poco inocente en cosas del mundo” (p. 213; ch. 33). As such, the narrator explains, “conocía mal nuestras costumbres y esta especialidad del vivir madrileño, que en otra parte se llamarían *misterios*, pero que aquí no son misterio para nadie” (213). Ironically, it is the eye doctor who cannot see the hypocrisy of Madrid society. Unlike Golfín, Refugio sees Madrid for what it is; unlike the rest of society, she talks about it. Informed by an unidentified male voice (who nonetheless affirms what Galdós seems to affirm, through his ironic narrator as well as through Refugio), perspicacious Refugio says what the actions of the other characters imply: In Madrid, everything is appearance and the society’s pervasive sin is complete hypocrisy.

Refugio Emperador’s name serves as an ironic note when combined with her keen societal vision. “Refugio,” as already mentioned, fits her role as Rosalía’s last hope for salvation from financial straits. However, “Emperador” (meaning *emperor*) is ironic because, through her observations of Madrid hypocrisy, Refugio marks the deterioration of the monarchic society, which is soon overthrown and replaced by another hypocritical system. Moreover, her social commentary is not restricted to the time of the Glorious

Revolution. In 1884, as in 1868, Spain crumbled behind a social façade. Ineffective economic practices and unrest overseas masqueraded as affluent security, but they hinted at the coming Great Disaster of 1898, when Spain ceased to be an empire. Like the young girls in chapter 8 who unwittingly allude to Francisco's future blindness, Refugio's commentary takes on more profound meaning in light of these later events. While Galdós may not have seen this particular Disaster for the society he criticizes, the "Emperor" nonetheless heralds the end of the Spanish empire. Indeed, Refugio's role is further ironized through Rosalía's representative function as Spain and the monarchy. Rosalía begrudgingly serves and in the end receives aid from the "Emperor," but as history went, neither monarchy nor empire could be sustained.

La de Bringas is a complex novel of irony, undercutting narrative, and referential characters who have been developed to various levels of detail and realism. Irony invades character depictions from the flattest and most caricatured of Galdós's creations to the most nuanced and rounded. Furthermore, the narrative irony that often remains implicit in a work is made explicit in the ironic perspective of the narrator: his mockery of those around him emphasizes his own presumption in considering himself superior. Political and social satire, often directed toward both the Spain of 1868 and 1884, revolves around Rosalía, who also provides a unique psychological portrait. Francisco, while not as developed as Rosalía, builds on her irony by contrast, and ends up symbolizing some of the key themes of the novel. According to Ricardo Gullón, "En la novela surge una realidad que, sin negar la cotidiana, va más allá" (14). Galdós paints his characters as real people—some known more intimately than others—but they also function as ironic metaphors to satirize the reader and the larger society. "Imagen de la

vida es la novela y el arte de componerla estriba en reproducir los caracteres humanos”
(Galdós 1897). Irony, so well developed in *La de Bringas*, is but one “marca de raza” in
Galdós’s toolbelt, and his narrator holds the key.

CHAPTER THREE

Expressions of Philosophy in *Niebla*

Unlike the nineteenth-century realist novel of Galdós, which highlights social and political commentary, *Niebla* (1914), by Miguel de Unamuno, explores the meaning of existence in such a careful way that he would later be identified with the philosophy of existentialism. J. A. G. Ardila avers: “Unamuno superpone la realidad irracional de la novela modernista a la realidad positivista de la novela realista, con atención especial a cómo el irracionalismo describe las angustias del ser humano” (358). While Unamuno’s intense existentialism stands out, many members of the Generation of 1898, a Spanish literary movement that sprang from Spain’s loss of its last overseas possessions, demonstrate similar thematic trends. The society that Galdós had critiqued had finally crumbled, and the loss of empire caused many Spanish writers to question national identity, and, in turn, their own individual identity. Unamuno responds to such questions in part through philosophical novels whose formal innovations reflected his existential explorations.

Niebla embodies this technical and philosophical trend; the fictive author and narrator plays a crucial role in its philosophical development, which is furthered by outside narrators in framing texts and interpolated narratives. In addition to the variety of narrative voices, the differing perspectives of characters, shared on the diegetic level, mix with the action to form a subtle dialogue about living and existing, doubt and agony. In this multifaceted, even contradictory, way, the work expresses a philosophy as much by depicting it in action as by theorizing about it. *Niebla* employs Bakhtinian dialogism,

using a multi-voiced and subversive environment to express Unamuno's own ideas of the agony of living and the doubt that exists because of the irreconcilable dualism between faith and reason.

The narrative structure of *Niebla* sets a multi-voiced backdrop for the story, weaving differing perspectives and doubt into a rather traditional plot. The fictional work begins with two framing texts: a prologue by Víctor Goti, the protagonist's best friend, introduces the narrative by questioning Unamuno's yet-unstated position on its outcome. A post-prologue follows, ostensibly written by Unamuno himself, which responds antagonistically to Víctor's text. The narrative body details the life of Augusto Pérez, the protagonist, largely through his monologues and conversations. The abundance of dialogue has often been cited as evidence that *Niebla* falls into a new genre, the *nivola*, on which Víctor expounds in a conversation with Augusto (ch. 12). As Víctor explains, a *nivola* communicates through characters' speech rather than the narrator's, and is supposed to be written without a plan. However, some critics argue that Unamuno undercuts even this distinction, subtly mocking the idea of genre itself.¹ Adding to the voices, various interpolated stories, such as those of don Eloíno and don Avito, are presented orally to the protagonist at various points in the larger text, adding a third, hypodiegetic layer to those of the narrative and framing discourse. Stepping back from the narrative, the narrator addresses the reader directly in a discursive paragraph in chapter 25, which further develops metafictional and philosophical themes. In the last three chapters, the figure of the narrator-author steps down from his throne to enter the

¹ See Pérez. In contrast to the spontaneous nature of the *nivola*, Pérez sets out to show *Niebla*'s careful structure and composition. See also Jurkevich ("Unamuno's Gestational Fallacy").

diegetic plane. He and Augusto talk, after which he narrates both Augusto's death and his own response to it, including a dream in which Augusto visits Unamuno. The novel ends with another framing text in the form of an epilogue that records the laments of Orfeo, Augusto's dog, on the death of his master.

The primary narrator of the work identifies himself as Unamuno. After the post-prologue rebuttal, he withdraws into an undramatized heterodiegetic voice who narrates primarily "objective" situations, such as dialogue. He also shares Augusto's thoughts, demonstrating special knowledge at least on that axis. The narrator Unamuno often quotes characters' thought or speech directly, allowing their points of view to reach the reader "unaltered." His own perspective, particularly regarding his relationship to the characters, becomes clear when he allows himself to narrate passages, but he interjects himself into the narration most directly through the discursive post-prologue and his address to the reader at the end of chapter 25. Chapter 30 marks a dramatic shift in the narration, when the previously heterodiegetic narrator becomes an actor in the narrative, transforming himself into a homodiegetic narrator or, one could argue, even steals the show to become an autodiegetic narrator. Secondary narrators are given voice both in the framing texts and in the main narrative. Víctor begins the entire work by contradicting Unamuno before the other has even begun, setting the scene for a subversive discourse at odds with itself. Augusto shares his point of view in both directly and indirectly communicated thoughts and words, and other characters narrate interpolated stories to him about themselves or others. Orfeo adds a non-human voice to the mix, becoming a narrator-agent as he contemplates his master and a narrator-observer as he considers

humanity in general. Together, these voices form a widely varied narrative base that is always under the watchful eye of the primary narrator, “Unamuno.”

Niebla's play often results in blurred narrative boundaries or points of uncertainty as the reader deals with unexpected interactions between narrator, character, and reader. To clarify I turn to Robert Spire, who offers useful insights for considering this complex work. First, he classifies it in the metafictional mode, which he defines as a self-referential mode that works by drawing attention to its fictionality, often by breaking the traditional boundaries between the worlds of the author, the story, and the reader (11-16). For example, a character from *Niebla* ostensibly writes its prologue, a task normally undertaken by someone from the author's and reader's world. The unusual situation attracts the reader's attention, while also obscuring normal parameters for understanding the text. The reader plays an especially important role in the work through her philosophical significance as well as her interaction with the text, creating the need for a distinction between the text-act reader (or implied reader) and the real reader. Spire notes that a real reader will try to project him or herself into the role of the text-act reader in order to “apprehend as accurately as possible the text's message” (12). However, just as the implied author does not fully represent the actual author, no reader can fully assume the qualities of the text-act reader; thus, the reader to whom Unamuno and Augusto refer is as multifaceted as *Niebla*'s continually changing reading public.

In any work of fiction, it is important to distinguish between the implied author and the narrator, but *Niebla* requires a more developed language than this simple dichotomy. For the present discussion, we will include Booth's idea of the career author, as applied to Unamuno by Jan Evans (*Unamuno and Kierkegaard* 80). While the implied

author refers to the projection of the author gathered from the work in question (e.g. *Niebla*), the career author references the image of the author formed by taking into account the larger body of his work. In this way, we can arrive at a closer approximation of what Unamuno the man actually believed and compare it to the various voices in the text, including the projection of his own. Because Unamuno enters his text as a character, we must differentiate between this fictive representation of Unamuno and the implied author, both of whom differ from the career author and Unamuno the man. The fictive character Unamuno shares many characteristics with the narrator Unamuno, including a sense of superiority and cohesion of voice. Thus, I will treat them as multiple expressions of one character. The implied and career authors are also fictional projections of the author. As Spires points out, “When the world of . . . the fictive author is violated and he is thereby made an explicit part of the fiction, standing beyond him is always another implied or fictive author” (16). However, in this thesis I use the term “fictive Unamuno” to describe the Unamuno presented as narrator and character in the work. I thus distinguish in this way between the character-narrator Unamuno and the also fictive implied and career authors for ease of reference only. When context makes clear which manifestation of the author/character is in question, I refer simply to Unamuno.

Other thinkers influence Unamuno’s philosophy that appears in the body of his writings, although his oeuvre is unique. Søren Kierkegaard’s ideas about indirect communication and the formation of substantial selfhood inform Unamuno’s position. Kierkegaard posits that the development of an authentic self requires self-reflection and choosing, which involves progressing through a set of predetermined phases or spheres.

Unamuno maintains the importance of choosing, but does not require a specific choice in life in order to arrive at authentic selfhood. Unamuno pulls from Kierkegaard the idea of the maieutic ideal, which requires each person to “give birth” to his or her own deep philosophy. Because of this need, an author cannot hand a philosophical idea to the reader. Rather, he must communicate indirectly, weaving circumstances together from which a reader might form his own significant thought (cfr. Evans 1-9, 49). Along with Kierkegaard, Unamuno’s philosophy precedes the existentialist trend of twentieth century thinkers who focus on the individual’s experience of existence, but critics have retroactively aligned both philosophers with this trend. Existential questions include, “Who am I?”, “What makes my existence authentic?”, and “What happens when I die?”. Unamuno deals with an existential theme in what he sees as the incompatibility of faith and reason and the agonizing doubt that springs from this clash, which is essential to the authentically human condition.

True to Unamuno’s drive for indirect communication and exploration, *Niebla* develops its theme dialogically. The exchange of prologues begins the dialogue, and the body of the text allows more voices to contribute to the debate. *Niebla* follows a traditional plot—falling in love, losing in love— and, as Janet Pérez notes, “Repetitive scenes and conversations are so abundantly used as to outnumber those without echo or parallel in the novel” (71). The familiarity of the plot provides space for existential exploration and development in Augusto, while the parallelism of the work contributes a sense of unification in the dialogic exchange. For example, when Augusto seeks the advice of Víctor, Domingo, and Paparrigópulos about whom he should love, he receives a range of answers. Neither is it always clear with whom the fictive, implied, or career

author Unamuno agrees. Rather than present one firm position in *Niebla*, Unamuno allows various characters to voice conflicting thoughts that both clash against each other and blend into a multilayered and self-doubting philosophical discussion.

Unamuno begins to develop the work's dialogism and his fictive personality in a set of prologues. Although later editions feature multiple essays added at the beginning of the work, the original text begins with a prologue evidently written by Víctor Goti, followed by a post-prologue in which the fictive Unamuno responds to Goti's words. In the prologue, Víctor refers to conversations that he has had with the fictive Unamuno and reveals many of Unamuno's goals and involvements in writing. In particular, he talks about Unamuno's obsession with "humorismo confusionista" (102). He explains that this type of humor is acrid, and that Unamuno employs it not to make his point more palatable, but less so. "Don Miguel se empeña en que si se ha de hacer reír a las gentes, debe ser [. . .] para que vomiten lo que hubieran engullido, pues se ve más claro el sentido de la vida y del universo con el estómago vacío de golosinas y excesivos manjares" (102). While it is unclear which of the Unamunos align with Víctor's assessment, the prologue as a whole demonstrates an ironic confusionism—the purposefully contradictory conglomeration of perspectives meant to inspire revolt, awareness, and perhaps authentic choice—that shrouds the implied Unamuno's true philosophy. Víctor begins by claiming that Unamuno's wish is like a command from God to him, but his later revelations (which Unamuno affirms were meant to be private) belie his stated subjugation to his author. The simple fact that Víctor is aware of Unamuno as his author breaks the accepted diegetic planes, a metafictional play that emphasizes the work's fictionality. Víctor also reveals the coming death of Augusto,

conveys Unamuno's certainty of being its orchestrator, and contradicts this perspective all at once, claiming instead that Augusto committed suicide; in doing so, he demonstrates his independence from his author. Unamuno created him but does not control him, whatever façade of submission Víctor may espouse. Significantly, Víctor is not only the first narrator of the work, but also the first to create an image of the fictive Unamuno, his own "creator."

In the post-prologue, Unamuno responds threateningly to Víctor's affrontery. Because he knows the "secret" of Víctor's existence (that he is fiction, and therefore dependent on his author for his very existence), Unamuno lets him speak, even though he explains: "Goti ha cometido en su prólogo la indiscreción de publicar juicios míos que nunca tuve la intención de que se hiciesen públicos" (107). Author and character reveal a unique relationship in their prologues, described by Unamuno as "la más íntima amistad" (107), which contrasts the expected construct in which the author may be privy to his characters' private thoughts, but never the reverse. *Niebla's* prologues place author and character on the same diegetic plane, allowing Víctor to share Unamuno's secrets rather than the other way around. In fact, while Víctor shares private information about Unamuno, Unamuno does not seem to have the privileged knowledge about Víctor that a reader would expect an omniscient narrator or implied author to possess: when Unamuno writes, "como fui yo quien le rogué que me lo escribiese, comprometiéndome de antemano —o sea *a priori*— a aceptarlo tal y como me lo diera" (107), he makes clear that he did not know "*a priori*" what his character would say.

The seeming equality, even amity, between the two clashes with the divine position that Unamuno defends in his threat to "let Víctor die" if the character acts too

carelessly. He proclaims himself “capaz de matar a Goti si veo que se me va a morir, o de dejarle morir si temo haber de matarle” (108). His statement reminds the reader of Goti’s fictionality and Unamuno’s power as his author, a power not only to write his physical death, but also to kill him by distorting his character to the point of being someone other than Víctor Goti, or to end his existence by simply not thinking about him anymore. Fernando de Toro expresses the sentiment thus: “Una vez creado el personaje, el autor no puede hacer nada para cambiarlo o hacerlo diferente, so pena de crear lo otro, pero nunca lo mismo” (360). From this perspective, Unamuno cannot dictate Víctor’s actions except at the risk of killing him. Rather, the author bears the responsibility of representing his characters justly, respecting their autonomy, and of knowing when they have come to the point of death. This sense of duty marks a humble approach to authorship because it makes the author responsible to his creations.

While the implied author Unamuno acknowledges his characters’ autonomy in the quote above, he also demonstrates a sense of superiority, speaking flippantly about a matter of life and death for his supposed friend. This confusing position forces the reader to confront the characters both as figments of the imagination and as real beings. Víctor introduces and Unamuno fleshes out a contradictory relationship between author and character, which plays into the ideas of confusionism that Víctor mentions, as well as subverting in Derridean fashion the position of power that Unamuno ostensibly holds. As Derrida would explain, Víctor decenters Unamuno’s position of superiority.

Unlike the introductory discourses, the dramatized Unamuno remains absent for the greater part of the novel, although the narrator’s tone and focus imply the same projection of Unamuno: distant, but also interested in and superior to his characters.

Chapter 1 begins with Augusto at his doorstep assessing the weather, which unexpectedly turns into his first recorded philosophical hypothesis.

Al recibir en el dorso de la mano el frescor del lento orvallo frunció el entrecejo.² Y no era tampoco que le molestase la llovizna, sino el tener que abrir el paraguas. ¡Estaba tan elegante, tan esbelto, plegado y dentro de su funda! Un paraguas cerrado es tan elegante como es feo un paraguas abierto.

«Es una desgracia esto de tener que servirse uno de las cosas — pensó Augusto—; tener que usarlas. El uso estropea y hasta destruye toda belleza.» (109)

The passage presents the reader with key information about both the narrator and the protagonist of the work. The narrator opens by describing Augusto's response to the drizzling rain objectively, writing what anyone could have observed. He then transitions into special knowledge of Augusto's thoughts, which he represents first indirectly and later through direct quotes. In doing this, Unamuno reveals his omniscience as narrator—absent in his earlier interchange with Víctor—and affirms the divine role that he later claims in relationship to Augusto. Thus, the narrator's position becomes apparent implicitly, while the protagonist takes center stage. Augusto reveals an idealist bent, with high-minded thoughts bordering on the ridiculous: Using an umbrella bothers him because the object is more beautiful closed. He ascribes to the ideals of modern art, or “art for art's sake,” and his aesthetic convictions conflict with practical reality.

The narrator initially presents his protagonist as a somewhat contradictory creature; even his name, “Augusto Pérez,” reflects this: “Augusto” meaning “august,” “high,” “imperial,” and Pérez being the most common last name in Spanish and the butt of many jokes such as “Ratoncito Pérez.” While the narrator presents Augusto as

² All quotations reflect the 1935 revised edition. For example, in this quotation Unamuno changed *sobrecejo* to *entrecejo* in 1928.

humorously high minded and out of touch with reality, the protagonist often voices the most profound ideas of the text, many of which are doubts expressed in his monologues. The narrator Unamuno sometimes dwells with a superior tone on Augusto's insignificant preoccupations, like his desire to leave his umbrella closed. However, the narrator also allows him to voice his most profound doubts and conflicts, often in the form of emotionally intense monologues directed at his dog Orfeo. For example, after a conversation with Rosario, the laundress, and a short interchange with Liduvina, his cook, he laments to his dog, "¡Ay, Orfeo, Orfeo, esto de dormir solo, solo, solo, de dormir un solo sueño! El sueño de uno solo es la ilusión, la apariencia; el sueño de dos es ya la verdad, la realidad. ¿Qué es el mundo real sino el sueño que soñamos todos, el sueño común?" (p. 169; ch. 11). Obviously, *Niebla* takes part in a quixotic literary tradition (questioning the relationship between reality and illusion), and also echoes the questions raised in Segismundo's speech from the major Baroque play "La vida es sueño" by Calderón de la Barca. Furthermore, Augusto's agonized doubt reflects the human experience as career author Unamuno has described it elsewhere. Toro puts it this way: "En *Niebla* Unamuno intenta, a través de Augusto Pérez, trasladar al lector el sentimiento de lucha-agonía" (364). More than intellectual questioning, Augusto expresses existential anguish in his doubt, questioning his purpose in existing and ultimately his experience of his reality.

Unamuno also uses dialogue among characters to develop the work's nuanced and subverting philosophy. In particular, Víctor and Augusto have several conversations that develop Unamuno's ideas and connect them to the action of their daily lives. In chapter 10, while the two discuss love and Augusto's experience with falling in love, Víctor

accuses Augusto of being removed from daily life, of loving intellectually and generically, and points to Augusto's falling in love with the orphaned piano teacher Eugenia before actually meeting her, as well as his new interest in every woman he sees. Víctor pushes farther, "Y si me apuras mucho te digo que tú mismo no eres sino una pura idea, un ente de ficción . . ." (157, elipsis in the original). While Víctor alludes to knowledge of his own fictionality in the prologue, he has not demonstrated awareness of this fact in the narrative; thus, his statement reads ironically, since it is truer than he seems to realize. On another level, the reader has agreed to accept the characters as representations of reality, and so Víctor's idea, like Augusto's question about illusion and reality, throws doubt on the world of the reader even while ironizing the fictionality of the characters.

Víctor's novelistic bent appears in other conversations, as well. As a novelist, or *nivolista*, Víctor is prone to referencing a supposedly hypothetical (though in his case all-too-real) author who records reality.

¡Hacer . . . , hacer, hacer! . . . ¡Bah, ya te estás sintiendo personaje de drama o de novela! [. . .] Como si el hablar no fuese hacer. [. . .] Si ahora, por ejemplo, algún *nivolista* oculto ahí tras ese armario, tomase nota taquigráfica de cuanto estamos aquí diciendo y lo reprodujese, es fácil que dijeran los lectores que no pasa nada, y, sin embargo . . . (p. 274; ch. 30).

Yet again, Víctor alludes to the possibility of his fictionality; Augusto responds that if readers "pudiesen verme dentro," they would think that nothing was going on. His sentiment is undercut by the novel surrounding it, in which his broadcasted thought-life provides critics with ample grounds to argue about his internal development and possible progression through various philosophical stages of life.³ Víctor, however, takes the

³ For an example of some positions critics have assumed, see Evans 67-68.

opportunity to push his insistence on fictionality further. “¿Por dentro? ¿Por dentro de quién? ¿De tí? ¿De mí? Nosotros no tenemos dentro. [. . .] El alma de un personaje de drama, de novela o de *nivola* no tiene más interior que el que le da [. . .] el lector” (274). As Víctor clarifies and intensifies his argument, the reader is forced to re-evaluate Víctor’s self-awareness. Does Víctor in fact know that he is a fictional character, and that Unamuno is his author? Or is he simply sharing a jaded perspective on existence in the metaphor of his field? In the end, the reader must decide, and it is to the reader, rather than the author, that Víctor gives priority in creating the soul of the character. His assertion both states the involvement of the general, implied reader in the creation of the text and acts to make the actual reader more cognizant in that moment of her/his relationship with the diegetic plane. In effect, it gives the reader a sense of superiority and power that somewhat mirrors that of Unamuno in the post-prólogo. According to C. A. Longhurst, works by Unamuno commonly “grant[] the reader pride of place by recognizing that the life of the text ultimately belongs to him or her alone” (752). In this case, Víctor’s comment also contributes to the metafictional mode of Unamuno’s work.

Unamuno remains undramatized for much of his narration, but he steps out from behind the curtain on key occasions, such as the post-prologue already discussed. In doing so, he displays an artificial Unamuno, the fictive author and narrator of the novel. In a short discursive paragraph appended to chapter 25, the narrator rises above his undramatized narration, referencing both himself (“yo, el autor de esta *nivola*”) and the individual reader who has *Niebla* “en la mano” (252). He pushes the superior tone of the post-prologue even further in this note, claiming that whenever his characters seek to justify themselves, they are really justifying him. “No hace en rigor otra cosa que

justificar a Dios. Y yo soy el Dios de estos dos pobres diablos *nivolescos*” (252). This expression of superiority makes explicit his stance as God to his characters. The existential correlation he draws can be represented thus:

Character (e.g. Augusto)—Unamuno : Person (e.g. Unamuno, the reader)—God

One might extrapolate, then, that all of Unamuno’s existential seeking, along with the reader’s own, serves to justify God rather than leading to a satisfactory end for the seeker. However, his insistence that his characters do not exist undercuts his ability to be justified by them. The assertion is further complicated by the multitude of Unamunos who may or may not support it.

Although the narrator Unamuno claims to be the actual author of the work, the Unamuno implied in this short discourse, who seems to align with the fictive Unamuno of chapter 31, undercuts himself, implying an author who sees and rises above the self-ironization of the narrator. The reader thoughtfully reconstructs the implied Unamuno through an evaluation of the many voices in the text, and some of these voices contradict the fictive Unamuno’s perspective. The digression in chapter 25, full of the arrogance of a god, is contradicted by Victor’s ideas in chapter 30 and Augusto’s argument in chapter 31 that Unamuno cannot control him. In the end, the implied author Unamuno maintains a perspective too full of contradiction, too dependent on subversion and doubt, to believe fully in his own novelistic divinity. In fact, Ardila describes the narrator Unamuno as an unreliable narrator who, he explains, “introduce en su relato ciertos componentes de incoherencia mediante los cuales indicar que se halla ante una obra de ficción” (351). In this way, Unamuno equalizes his fictive self with the other voices in the novel, undercutting the fictive Unamuno’s stated confidence and suggesting instead a deep-

seated doubt in the career author that, indeed, he expresses in other works, as well. At the same time the note acts as another metafictional marker.

In addition to the primary narrator who is eventually identified as a projection of Unamuno, several characters become secondary narrators when they share personal experience or gossip with Augusto. Critics vary widely on the defining parameters of these episodes and on how many occur in the novel, as well as what unifies them with each other or with the larger narrative.⁴ A commonly accepted interpolated tale is don Avito Carrascal's story. After an altercation with Eugenia, Augusto confusedly goes to a church, and he happens to leave at the same time as Avito. Although many who count this tale say that it is about Avito's son's suicide, the primary narrator merely informs the reader that Avito "le contó la lamentable historia de su hijo" (p. 173; ch. 13). Avito then narrates about how this tragedy changed his life, philosophy, and marital relationship.

Don Eloíno Rodríguez de Albuquerque y Álvarez de Castro's sensationalistic last months, narrated by Víctor, constitute another interpolated story. The gossip creates an outlet for Víctor's novelistic flare as he weaves the story verbally for Augusto. Ironically, Augusto doubts the story's veracity, saying, "Pues todo eso, Víctor, parece inventado" (p. 197; ch. 17). While it is, assumably, invented from Unamuno's and the reader's point of view, Víctor asseverates its truthfulness, assuring Augusto, "hay cosas que no se inventan" (197). Like Avito, Eloíno's story deals with gender relations, a theme in Augusto's life, as well. However, narratologically speaking, the two come to the reader through vastly different lenses. The narrator Unamuno cuts through most of Avito's tale, but Avito then communicates the rest as a homodiegetic narrator. Eloíno

⁴ Cfr. Jurkevich ("Unamuno's Anecdotal Digressions"), Ardila.

never narrates his story, depending instead on Víctor's gossipy alterodiegetic point of view to give his story shape. These are just two examples of the varied voices found in the secondary stories of *Niebla*. The variety of narrators and perspective relieves the primary narrative of its one-track focus as well as allowing for metafictional and philosophical exploration in smaller segments of narrative.

Niebla includes a variety of not only narrative voices but also intertextual ties. Critics have compared it to *Fortunata y Jacinta* and *Pygmalion*, and drawn connections between Unamuno's indirect communication and that of Kierkegaard.⁵ Most notably, *Niebla* reflects Cervantine ideas and techniques. Both *Niebla* and *Don Quixote* deal with multiple narrators both in the larger text and through inserted episodes. *Niebla*'s use of fictionalized framing texts with multiple narrators echoes Cervante's "friend" who inspired the prologue of *Don Quixote* and the poems by the academicians of Argamasilla appended to the end of book I. The interpolated stories serve to expand an already dialogic narrative. Both works also explore different types of narrators in their interpolated stories. Just as Unamuno includes the introspective autodiegetic narrative of Avito along with the gossipy, alterodiegetic Víctor in Eloíno's story, Cervantes plays with first-person, third-person, and multiple narrators in his interpolated texts. For example, the fragmented and pluralistic development of the *Cardenio—Lucinda—Fernando—Dorotea* affair (told in pieces by various narrators, before rising to a climax in which Don Quixote, who was previously only a listener, participates) contrasts starkly

⁵ Cfr. Franz, Evans, Ardila. Critics have also seen the influence of *Niebla* in more recent works, such as *El profesor inútil*, by Benjamín Jarnés (see Johnson, "El profesor inútil") and even cinematic productions such as the recent *Stranger than Fiction* (see Alvarez-Castro).

with Eugenio's monologic narration of Leandra's seduction in I:50-52, which offers no mitigation of the single narrator's admittedly narrow perspective.

Niebla draws from *Don Quixote* thematically, as well. Both works deal with questions of literature, reality vs. fiction (or illusion), and existence. While these themes run throughout and are embedded into the dialogic structure and perspectivism of *Niebla*, their Cervantine roots come to the fore in Augusto's confrontation with his "creator" Unamuno. Augusto perturbs his interlocutor with what career-author Unamuno has said about the relative existence of Don Quixote and Cervantes. "¿No ha sido usted el que no una, sino varias veces, ha dicho que Don Quijote y Sancho son no ya tan reales, sino más reales que Cervantes?" (279). According to the career author Unamuno, these characters became more real than their creator through living in the minds of so many readers through the centuries. Cervantes, he argues, is known because he wrote *Don Quixote*, *Don Quixote* is not known because Cervantes was his author. This theory seems to argue that the existence of an idea in the minds of readers, which spreads farther and outlives the existence of one human for his lifetime, is thus more real. As Augusto earlier lamented, "El sueño de uno solo es la ilusión, la apariencia; el sueño de dos ya es la verdad, la realidad. ¿Qué es el mundo real sino el sueño que soñamos todos, el sueño común?" (p. 169; ch. 12). Augusto, through being a fictional idea, rises to a more real state than his creator because he can become part of his readers' dreams, which unite to form reality. The equation flips the normal hierarchy where "our world" is superior to fiction, and it highly respects the role of the reader, even as it undercuts the assumption of his or her own existence. Of course too, since Unamuno has fictionalized himself as a character within his own work, he, too, can enjoy the "reality" and "immortality" of a

fictional character, just like other fictional entities that now live in the readers' minds and have outlived their career authors.

In the chapter 31 conversation between Augusto and his creator, Unamuno begins arrogantly, but by the end of the conversation the fictive author as well as the character are shaken. The conversation comes about because Unamuno exists as an author in Augusto's fictive world, and Augusto, having read some of his texts, wants to seek his advice. Instead of encountering a mere philosopher who can perhaps advise Augusto on his plan to commit suicide, however, he confronts a man claiming to be his author and creator, and who demonstrates special knowledge of even his secret thoughts. If as his author, Unamuno is indeed Augusto's God, Augusto encounters a deity whose own security rests on his character's fictionality and ultimate powerlessness.

Unamuno narrates the chapter in the first person, a radical shift from the practically undramatized telling of the previous narrative. From a superior but removed observer, Unamuno becomes a self-satisfied actor in his own play. When sharing Augusto's "secret" with him, he delights that Augusto looks at him "como quien mira a un ser increíble" (278). "Le tenía yo fascinado", he adds (279). All of a sudden, the fictive Unamuno's character comes into focus; the smug disregard for his characters that he demonstrates in the post-prologue and the chapter 25 note comes to a head as he informs Augusto that he exists only as fiction—which to this Unamuno means not at all. Safe in his superiority, Unamuno treats Augusto with condescending care: "Pues bien: la verdad es, querido Augusto —le dije con la más dulce de mis voces—, que no puedes matarte porque no estás vivo" (279). Unamuno's saccharine tone emerges from his sense of being untouchable rather than any real compassion for Augusto. To be fair, though,

one must remember that he is not addressing another human but rather a creature in his mind, as he insists that Augusto is nothing but “un producto de mi fantasía y de las de aquellos de mis lectores que lean el relato que de tus fingidas venturas y malandanzas he escrito yo” (279). It makes sense that he lacks compassion for a figment of his imagination, but it breaks with the reader’s sense of justice for two reasons: First, the reader, on some level, has agreed to accept the reality of the characters introduced and here Unamuno refuses to honor that contract. Second, the Unamuno who denies Augusto’s existence and simultaneously calls himself his God is really his equal: merely a product of the real or implied author’s imagination, and of ours.

At this point, the conversation shifts. Earlier, Augusto replied to Unamuno’s statements with a half-believing incredulity, asking, “¿Cómo que no estoy vivo? ¿Es que he muerto?” and later, “¿Cómo que no existo?” (278-9). Unamuno’s claim goes against what seems undeniable in Augusto’s own life. Paradoxical in essence (because one does not normally ask questions when one does not exist), these questions also show Augusto’s epistemological struggle between his empirical or intuitive sense of being (*ser*) and Unamuno’s authority, backed by his apparent omniscience regarding Augusto’s life. After a moment of reflection, Augusto chooses to trust himself against his author’s words. “Mire usted bien, don Miguel . . . ,” he says, even with a twinkle in his eye, “no sea que esté usted equivocado y que ocurra precisamente todo lo contrario de lo que usted se cree y me dice” (279). The unexpected rejoinder, demonstrating a mind that is indeed autonomous from his interlocutor, in combination with the ironic confidence with which Augusto delivers it, mark Augusto’s metaphysical revival and the commencement of Unamuno’s own loss of confidence.

Augusto's ability to defy Unamuno erases the distance between them that Unamuno had maintained for the entirety of the novel. Alarmed at Augusto's demonstration of independent life and will, Unamuno's agitation only grows when Augusto suggests that he is but the pretext for bringing Augusto's story to the world. The roles have reversed. Augusto even calls Unamuno "mi querido don Miguel" in an echo of Unamuno's earlier condescending turn of phrase, and takes the superior role in trying to calm his author:

—No se exalte usted así, señor de Unamuno —me replicó—, tenga calma. Usted ha manifestado dudas sobre mi existencia . . .
—Dudas, no —le interrumpí—; certeza absoluta de que tú no existes fuera de mi producción novelesca.
—Bueno, pues no se incomode tanto si yo a mi vez dudo de la existencia de usted y no de la mía propia. Vamos a cuentas: ¿no ha sido usted el que no una, sino varias veces, ha dicho que Don Quijote y Sancho son no ya tan reales, sino más reales que Cervantes? (279)

Unamuno claims absolute certainty that Augusto does not exist, yet his emotional response to his creation's words belies his unequivocal denial. Furthermore, Augusto makes use of career-author Unamuno's own stated opinions to argue against Don Miguel, emphasizing the division between the fictive Unamuno and the real one. In this case, the career author aligns more with Augusto's words than with Unamuno's projection of himself. As previously noted, this subversion of the fictive author allows for a more complex and uncertain dialogism that mirrors the career author's own insistent doubt about his existence after death.

If one considers the relationship of *God—Person* established between Unamuno and Augusto, the conversation takes on clear yet subverted religious analogies. The idea of the author breaking the boundary between himself and his creation and entering into his fictional world mimics a foundational belief of Christianity: that God entered into *his*

world in the form of Jesus Christ. Augusto's desire to kill Unamuno also contributes to this theme. As Augusto tells his creator, "Siéntese y tenga calma. ¿O es que cree usted, amigo don Miguel, que sería el primer caso en que un ente de ficción, como usted me llama, matara a aquel quien creyó darle el ser . . . ficticio?" (282). Ironically, in the most prominent time that "fictional" beings killed their creator, these beings existed in our diegetic plane, bringing fictionality and reality together yet again. However, in Unamuno's world, creation rather than creator suffers death at the other's hand, as Unamuno pronounces that Augusto will die for daring to think about killing him, saying, "me temo que, en efecto, si no te mato pronto acabes por matarme tú" (284). As Augusto leaves condemned, however, Unamuno wipes away a "furtive tear," echoing the religious role of Judas, the betrayer who repented too late of the death he instigated. Unamuno may mourn Augusto's death, and even consider resurrecting him (in chapter 33), but as he claims to Augusto, "Lo tengo ya escrito y es irrevocable; no puedes vivir más" (284).

Orfeo, Augusto's faithful dog, is the last secondary narrator to speak, so to speak, when he narrates the "Oración fúnebre por modo de epílogo." One could read Orfeo's doghood, combined with his place of honor and voice in the text, as insultingly ironic. Is the implied author mocking the reader for taking his book too seriously? But Unamuno introduces Orfeo respectfully, without exaggerated grandiloquence, calling him "el que más honda y sinceramente sintió la muerte de Augusto" (296). Then he simply quotes Orfeo's laments and meditations while "acurrucado a los pies de su amo muerto" (297). It seems that the implied author intends for Orfeo to be taken seriously, which implies a humility of position, that humankind with all its advancement and rhetoric could learn from a dog. In "Elegía a la muerte de un perro," Unamuno has already used the analogy

of the relationship between a dog and his owner to explore existential questions inherent in the *human—God* relationship.

Orfeo brings to the already developed dialogism a unique appraisal of the human condition, one that requires his outside perspective and experience as a dog. His critique focuses on the hypocrisy of humanity, which he believes is rooted in language. “La lengua le sirve para mentir, inventar lo que no hay y confundirse,” he thinks (297). Language twists the truth; it is the root of humanity’s problems, separating us from life and giving us hypocrisy instead. His critique ironically subverts the entire text, because of course *Niebla* is formed of language. Even his own sentiments are communicated to the reader through the written word. However, Orfeo considers how much he taught Augusto through silence. “¡Fue un hombre, sí, no fue más que un hombre, fue sólo un hombre! ¡[sic]Pero fue mi amo! ¡Y cuánto, sin él creerlo ni pensarlo, me debía! . . . ¡Cuánto! ¡Cuánto le enseñé con mis silencios, con mis lametones, mientras él me hablaba, me hablaba, me hablaba!” (299). Orfeo expresses grief for his master, as well as compassion for the human condition, manifested in Augusto’s desperate talking. The dog used his silences, his listening and licks, to teach Augusto and lift him up from the confusionism of language. He does not disdain humanity, but he feels compassion for us, and he loves his master. The fictive Unamuno discovered that his authorial superiority was less grounded than he thought; the wisdom of the dog is that we as humans are not as superior as we think. Our advancements, language included, do not necessarily lead us to a more authentic life. On this radically other note, the dialogic exchange of *Niebla* comes to an end.

All of the voices present in the narrative, from the prologue by Víctor and Unamuno's response through the dialogue and narration of the main text to Unamuno's manifestation as a character on the diegetic level and Orfeo's final critique, coalesce to form an existential discourse that speaks to Unamuno's philosophy in both form and content. Bakhtin proposes that every novel is dialogic, but in *Niebla*, dialogism is ontologically significant, begetting uncertainty in a reflection of the darkly humorous confusionism that Víctor mentions in the prologue as well as the anguish of doubt that Augusto experiences. Unamuno's blend of realism and irrationality build into the constantly subverted metafictional world that allows for a constantly subverted existential stance. In order to help the reader to authentic selfhood, the book must jar the reader with real existential doubt rather than providing a self-content position. Furthermore, it is the irrational in plot and confusion in philosophy that express the condition of humanity according to Unamuno, the career author. Although most of the narrative follows an ostensibly traditional storyline, the cacophony of voices it contains, as well as the rupture of the traditional boundaries between author, story, and reader, give birth to an obstinately fictional reality that leaves the reader questioning its multifaceted, subverted and subverting existential significance. This, I argue, is exactly what the implied Unamuno seeks.

CHAPTER FOUR

Images of Restriction in *Entre visillos*

By necessity, *Entre visillos* (1958) by Carmen Martín Gaité communicates differently through its narrative structure and narrators than do either of the previously discussed works. *La de Bringas* critiques Spain's socio-political structures with cutting, ironic realism. While *Niebla* finds a cultural foundation in Spain's self-questioning after "el gran Desastre," it takes a metafictional and metaphysical approach to the individual's existential identity. Writing during Franco's dictatorship (1939-1975), Martín Gaité needed to find subversive ways to communicate her social critique in spite of strict official censorship. Fraught with social injustices, the Franco regime created a literary environment more concerned with social commentary than with literary creativity. *Entre visillos* demonstrates this concern in its depiction of the lives of several young women in an unnamed provincial city (probably Salamanca). Returning to the more traditional realist narrative, called "neo-realism," "objectivism," or "social realism" by the critics, it differs from the Galdosian nineteenth-century style in its avoidance of the intrusive omniscient narrator. The novel incorporates multiple narrative voices and psychological sketches swathed in a monotonous social environment. Restricted in what it can say overtly, *Entre visillos* nevertheless critiques Spanish society, particularly the limited roles and identities the Regime gave to women, allowing the reader to draw connections and conclusions from its seemingly innocuous but socially critical presentation of an "objective slice of life," including characters and their activities, the spaces in which they move, and even silence on certain aspects of daily life.

Rather than delineating a clear plot structure, *Entre visillos* presents one vignette after another, allowing proximity in the text as well as repetition of theme, location, and character to connect the scenes in the reader's mind. According to John Kronik, "the want of a plot line, of solid connecting links, and of psychological penetration is *Entre visillos*' necessary mode of recreation" (50). Rather than a conventional plot orchestrated and signaled by a single narrator, the work pieces together various scenes, voices, and perspectives within the societal framework of 1950's Salamanca. Kronik called this structure a mosaic, an image that appears in the text itself, as well. Near the end of part I, Pablo sits in a café and repeatedly looks across the street to a store display window. "Los botones y puntillas, los objetos de plástico, formaban un mosaico de cosas en montón y al mismo tiempo cruzadas, combinadas, cambiándose de un color a otro, brillando" (p. 161; ch. 11). The casual and chaotic visual interaction within the display comes from its conglomeration of various commonplace items. As with the window display, the novel's narratives are of the everyday sort, and in their combination and almost haphazard repetition, they reveal the patterns of social limitations without the narrator's making an explicit critique. Perhaps Pablo's response to the shop-front mosaic also reflects the reader's experience of the novel: "me atraía y me producía letargo aquel escaparate; llegó a ser para mí la cosa más familiar" (161). The commonplace events of the novel can lull the reader into inadvertence of the larger social critique. They become familiar modes of life, and only when one steps back does one begin to see the bigger picture.

Rather than add drama to the dull routine of a provincial city's social scene, *Entre visillos* uses its very triviality to condemn the restrictions of the society in which it takes place. Kronik observes, "it is pointless to search . . . for the drama of characters in a

novel that, lacking a protagonist, is bent on projecting the absence of drama and luster in their humdrum lives” (50). Characters meet at the *casino*, at the movies, at a party.

When not frequenting such social venues, they often discuss them. The repetition underlines the limitations set on young people, particularly women. Pablo presents a foil to the monotony with his international travel and unorthodox relationship with Rosa, but even he is drawn into the restrictive modes of the society, and it suffocates him.

Although not strictly social pastimes, church and school are also acceptable activities in young women’s lives, provided of course, that the school is of the right sort. In the absence of varied activity, then, the novel offers multiple perspectives on the dull, limited and repetitive pastimes that all the characters share in Franco Spain.

Entre visillos combines three main narrative voices moving between first and third-person narrators. The undramatized, omniscient narrator presents chapters 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, and 17, although some of these chapters include journal excerpts or letters as interpolated texts. Pablo Klein, a German teacher who returns to Salamanca to teach in the city in which he had spent part of his childhood, narrates chapters 2, 4, 6, 8, 11, 15, and 18, while sixteen-year-old Natalia Ruiz narrates chapters 13 and 16, as well as the opening pages of the novel through a short excerpt from her journal. Thus, narration toggles back and forth between first and third-person voices at almost every chapter, but with enough exceptions to create a more complex structure, particularly when one considers that there are two first-person narrators: a male who speaks directly for seven chapters and a female who speaks for two. Although the novel is primarily about the social lives of young women in Salamanca, the male teacher Pablo, recently arrived in the city, speaks more than Natalia, the only overtly female voice allowed to

speak directly to the reader. Both could be considered protagonists of the work, and each narrates in an autodiegetic manner. However, Natalia's narrating feels more immediate, as if the chapters that she narrates were written soon after the events occurred, perhaps in her journal, whereas Pablo seems to narrate more retrospectively. The undramatized, heterodiegetic narrator that narrates one half of the novel offers an even more distanced telling, although this voice focalizes through several characters, especially females, throughout the narrative. Thus, the reader's connection to and perspective on the story remains in constant flux.

Sharply contrasting Galdós' intrusive narrator, the heterodiegetic narrator plays an unobtrusive role in the narrative. The voice narrates actions without outside commentary and transcribes large blocks of conversation. It also shares various characters' perspectives using the free indirect style, thus demonstrating its omniscience, although it takes pains to maintain a neutral and impersonal stance in its narrative. Because Martín Gaité is a woman, the reader may feel that this unidentified narrator is female, perhaps even that it aligns with the implied author herself. However, this voice defies personhood and gender, acting as a lens that focuses on different characters' lives rather than the involved first-person narrating of *La de Bringas* or even the primarily third-person fictive author-narrator of *Niebla*. This voice depicts the different pieces of the mosaic, and even offers some amount of psychological depth through focalization, but it refuses to analyze the scenes it portrays or make connections for the reader. While the implied author arranges the mosaic of different narrative voices and perspectives in order to show the oppression of Spanish society, the undramatized narrator seeks only to represent each "botón" and "puntilla" accurately and fully, as if it were offering photographs or simply

recording a “slice of life.” The narrator’s subjectivity only reveals itself in the choice of details and scenes it “portrays” or the conversations it “records.”

At times, however, the undramatized voice seems to gain an almost-personhood in its zeal for catching the social interaction of a scene. Chapter 12 presents the zenith of its narrative activity, partially due to the gathering of several recurring characters along with many new faces at a party in Yoni’s hotel flat. During the chapter, the narrator flits from one to another, giving chunks of dialogue and focalizing through various young women successively. The “self-conscious text [. . .] accomplishes its design as much through playful invention of expressive modes as with the dutiful representation of reality” (Kronik 52), and the narrative voice gains personality through its playful expression if not in its commentary. Ostensibly acting objectively, it still chooses what to present and how, and its manner reveals a delight in forms of expression. For example, chapter 12 opens without preamble:

—Anda, sécate los ojos.

Gertru cogió el pañuelo grande que olía ligeramente a tabaco y colonia Varón Dandy. Todavía tenía los dobles de recién planchado.
(179)

The narrative voice offers no explanation of who speaks or from where the handkerchief appears. Rather, it allows the reader to extrapolate from the partial information it supplies, or continue reading to discover that Gertru speaks to her fiancé Ángel. Before understanding the scene that she/he has been thrown into, however, the reader picks up on several clues in the text. The abrupt opening words suggest insensitivity or irritation on the part of the speaker. The handkerchief is large and smells of tobacco and cologne (ironically called “Varón Dandy”); this cannot be Gertru’s kerchief, so it follows that someone has offered it to her, perhaps even before the chapter began. Its specific scents

and well cared-for condition also give clues as to the type of person who owns it. The fact that these details are noted just as Gertru grasps the kerchief suggests that she noticed them, and the narrator merely reflects her observations in the free indirect style. Gertru's perception, in turn, could imply an ironic awareness of detail amid her distress. Thus two lines, which actually state only half of the information they contain, allow the narrative voice to suggest much while maintaining a neutral façade.

As Ángel and Gertru continue their argument, the narrator switches its gaze to a group of Ángel's friends in the room but not within hearing distance. Ángel is berating Gertru about a homemade snack that she brought to the hotel for him, which he says made him look cheap in front of his friends.⁶ Ironically, the friends' conversation reveals no hint that they even noticed the *bocadillo casero* that Gertru brought Ángel, much less judged him for it; rather, they think that Gertru is upset about Ángel visiting a prostitute the night before. The narrator never condemns Ángel, but the conversations do, contrasting his forceful reproach of a sandwich that Gertru had intended to be a nice surprise and his actual sexual infidelity, which, according to his friends, could be the only thing deserving censure in their relationship. This oscillating focus of the narrative voice presages its style for the rest of the chapter.

When the party at Yoni's flat begins, the narrator has many more people on whom to focus, usually transitioning from one to another through conversations. At first, the narrative voice details the general conversation, for the most part in direct quotations, with topics ranging from music to Yoni's international acquaintances to his art. When Ángel and Gertru arrive, the reader hears Ángel's offhand introduction of his fiancée as

⁶ In addition to the feminist critique, Ángel's position of hunger criticizes the endemic poverty and food shortages of the post-war period.

well as Manolo's disparaging aside. Later, Federico Hortal asks if he can invite Julia to the party, adding, "¿No te importa? Me divierte porque me ha empezado a hacer confidencias de su novio" (186). With this unsettling comment, Federico makes the call. At first, the narrator gives voice to his end of the conversation — "¿Me hace el favor? ¿La señorita Julia? Ah, eres tú . . . Nada, ¿qué haces?" — but after a paragraph of narrating the hotel's half of the dialogue, it jumps to Julia's house — "Julia dejó el teléfono y fue a llamar a Mercedes" (186). The narrator makes similar jumps between Julia y Mercedes, including an analeptic episode, which Genette defines as a narrative anachrony that tells a part of the story that happened before the narrative "present" (40). After portraying a dialogue between Julia and Natalia and Mercedes' subsequent entrance into the room, the narrator details Mercedes' movements during the time of her sisters' conversation. Once Julia and Mercedes arrive at the party, they separate quickly, and the narrator turns its recording lens from one to another, also lightly focalizing through Gertru's eyes as she meets Pablo Klein and describing some of the general raillery and suggestive dialogue of the men. The quickly changing focalization creates a fragmented and diversified view of the party that ironizes characters who lack a full awareness of the talk around them and allows the debauched conversation to condemn itself.

Unlike the heterodiegetic narrator, Natalia functions centrally as a character in the story as well as in her narratological role. Natalia's personality first takes shape in her own written reflections, but others' perspectives of her quickly add an outside element to her characterization. Despite the delay in narrating an entire chapter, Natalia is the first voice to introduce herself, as well as the first narrator of the novel in an excerpt from her journal, in which she talks about a walk she took with her friend Gertru. The differences

between Gertru and her are clear: while Gertru delights in growing up and going to dances with her boyfriend (later fiancé) Ángel, Natalia resists entering adulthood and even dissembles to Gertru about why she will not attend a dance. She also hides her journal and pretends to have been asleep when a maid comes to her bedroom while she writes. The first presentation of Natalia, then, shows the reader a need for secrecy as a form of defense against a hostile world. Later in chapter 1, the reader sees Natalia through other characters' eyes. Her oldest sister Mercedes describes her as "salvaje" (58), and their acquaintance Isabel comments that she looks older from a distance. Although she has recently turned sixteen (Gertru is two months younger and still fifteen), Natalia refuses to wear the long dresses that are in fashion for girls as young as thirteen, or to participate in adult activities such as the dance at the *Aeropuerto* (also in chapter 1).

As the novel progresses, Natalia's character develops mostly through an outside voice. After the first chapter, she does not speak or write directly until two-thirds of the way through the novel. Although the undramatized narrator focalizes through her at times, it portrays many of her thoughts and struggles through dialogues and objective observations. Natalia's primarily external characterization portrays her as often disconnected from or uncomfortable in the society that surrounds her. Chapter 1 sets the stage for this unease in the dominant society; her forced sally into the *casino* in chapter 5 reaffirms it. In the same chapter, she emerges as a confident, enthusiastic advisor to her sister Julia, but even this engagement shows how at odds she is with the predominant trends of society. This outside perspective with some special knowledge comprises the bulk of Natalia's characterization. However, Natalia herself narrates her first appearance

in the novel, as well as her and Pablo's meeting in chapter 13, thus becoming the first voice to represent another subjective narrator within the work.

Natalia's narrating follows the style of a journal entry. The excerpt that opens the novel takes the form of an actual entry, which she wrote the day after the events she narrates. Chapters 13 and 16, however, are not put in quotes or followed by a third-person narration of her in the act of writing. Regardless of their ambiguous state, both chapters read as a personal account of recent events. Natalia includes a large amount of directly quoted dialogue in her narrative, although visibly less than the undramatized narrator. Perhaps because the chapters she narrates are not explicitly journal entries, however, the improbability of her remembering the details of each verbal interchange does not raise pressing questions of reliability in the reader's mind. At times, her narration is less direct, taking a more informal and intimate approach. On her return to school, she writes, "[las chicas del Instituto] me han preguntado por Gertru, que les ha extrañado que no esté en las listas. Yo les he dicho que se va a casar pronto. Que con quién" (206). Rather than quoting the exchange, Natalia outlines it for the reader. Her use of the past perfect implies a sense of immediacy and of the past still having an impact on the present, and the fragmented sentences and continual use of "que" contribute to the comfortable sense of a casual, personal, and young narrator.

Pablo Klein, on the other hand, narrates his observations of Salamanca and its cast of characters with a retrospective style. From chapter 2, when he tells of his arrival in the city, his status as outsider is clear. Unlike Natalia's brief narration in chapter 1, Pablo's words are free of quotation marks or other indicators that make his act of writing explicit. He never clarifies the situation surrounding his narration. As though he were recalling

the story to a friend at some temporal distance from its occurrence, Pablo begins by defining the time of year rather than introducing himself. “Llegué hacia la mitad de septiembre, después de un viaje interminable” (p. 64; ch. 2). Thus the reader faces an unknown first-person narrator whose opening line suggests an autodiegetic style with a reminiscent tone. However, Pablo’s narrative focus swiftly turns to observing those around him, and while he remains the protagonist of his narrating, in that his own actions and experience dictate the content of the narration, others’ actions and interactions form much of what interests him.

In early chapters, his narrative gaze falls primarily on Rosa, a singer or “animadora” at the *casino*, on Elvira Domínguez, the daughter of the recently deceased director of the Instituto de Enseñanza Media, and on Emilio, a man who courts Elvira and stalwartly seeks a friendship with Pablo. Later, when Rosa moves away and the school year starts, Pablo narrates about his students, as well. As with both of the other narrators, Pablo includes large portions of direct dialogue, allowing the characters’ words to build the reader’s sense of Salamancan society with colloquial realism. His experience at the *casino* as the friend of Rosa offers a poignant critique of the prejudices among women of different social classes. During a break in her singing, Rosa speaks to Pablo while he is dancing with another woman. As soon as they dance away, his partner questions him, “—¿Por qué has bailado conmigo? —me preguntó la chica desabridamente.” She adds that she does not like serving “de plato de segunda mesa” (p. 137; ch. 8). “No entendía,” says Pablo.

La miré a los ojos, venciendo la timidez que me producía hacerlo.
Su mirada alta y seria escapaba a otra parte.

—Pero eso es absurdo. Yo . . . Dime qué es lo que te ha molestado.

[. . .]

—Te crearás que todas somos como tu amiga.

—¿Mi amiga? ¿Quién? ¿Rosa?

—No sé cómo se llama ni me interesa tampoco. (137)

The woman's obvious distaste for Rosa, a working-class woman, contrasts Pablo's perceptive observation that Rosa's job involves putting on a false self "con tanta pintura y los gestos afectados que hacía delante del micrófono" (p. 135; ch. 8). For Pablo's partner, Rosa is simply an unpleasant object, and any association with her, or with the kind of man who would associate with her, brings the other woman's own decency into question. The implied offence is so obvious to her that she hardly feels a need to explain herself, assuming instead that Pablo considers her to be like his "friend," which she apparently connotes with "a loose woman."

Pablo also reveals aspects of his own personality in his reactions to the people around him. In the conversation above, he cannot grasp at first the reason for his dance partner's insulted manner. His incredulity underlines his status as outsider in the society, or, as Joan Lipman Brown calls it, his "nonconformity" (Brown 166-8). Pablo spends much of his time participating in the limited pastimes available, including some that members of society deride. He takes walks, frequents cafés, and becomes friends with the *animadora* Rosa. Since Pablo does not face the added restrictions of a female in that society nor does he have an interfering family concerned with decorum, one could argue that "the dissatisfaction which afflicts the male nonconformist protagonist of *Entre visillos* is the novel's harshest condemnation of the oppressiveness of provincial society" (Brown 168). Pablo's narrating of his interaction with the affronted dance partner also hints at another aspect of his character. Not understanding her, Pablo writes, "La miré a los ojos, venciendo la timidez que me producía hacerlo" (137). While other characters do

not often describe Pablo as timid, he expresses a sense of social reserve or anxiety on multiple occasions. When he alludes to his first meeting with the new director of the Instituto, for example, he writes, “contra lo que había temido, la entrevista con él fue semejante a una conversación entre viejos conocidos y pude hacerle toda clase de preguntas sin sentir violencia” (p. 130; ch. 8). Although the conversation went smoothly, his fear that it would lack this amity, or that he would not be able to ask questions without anxiety, shows his expectation of a more painful interaction.

When others characterize Pablo, most focus on his premature graying or describe him as nice. While focalizing through Gertru during Yoni’s party in chapter 12, the heterodiegetic narrator briefly describes him: “A ella le presentaron a un chico delgado y de algunas canas, Pablo Klein, alemán. Se sentó allí al lado, sin hablar en bastante rato, como ella” (196). Later, when Gertru and Ángel walk home, Ángel asks about him, “Oye, ¿quién era ese chico de las canas que se sentó un momento con Ernesto donde tú?” (199). Apparently, Pablo’s white-streaked hair stands out as his most prominent feature, while he remains young enough for both Gertru and Ángel to call him “un chico.” After an evening at the Domínguez residence, Teo retracts his first, negative impression of Pablo and says, “sabe de todo, lo cuenta todo tan bien, qué agradable es. Y sobre todo tan sencillo” (p. 231; ch.14). Elvira, however, has increasingly distasteful interactions with him, and indeed, suffers more through her interaction with him than any other character. Natalia also shares some observations about Pablo. “Le he dicho a Alicia que si ella no encuentra que el profesor de alemán está un poco triste, pero ella dice que no, que le parece muy simpático” (p. 209; ch. 13). While others note his hair or think of him as smart or kind, Natalia’s first impression is one of sadness, or, as she goes on to

explain, “un aire de estar en otro sitio, algo especial, que dan ganas de saber lo que está pensando” (210). This mysterious melancholy is perhaps the beginning of an adolescent attraction, but it also affirms the impression of Pablo as intelligent and introverted that one gathers from the other perspectives.

While walking home from the Instituto, Natalia and Pablo begin a dialogue that shows how disconnected Pablo is from the societal mores while also subverting these ideas about acceptable female behavior and career options. From a narratological standpoint, this is the first conversation the two narrators share, and Natalia narrates. By contrasting the accepted standards and limitations of the provincial society with an outsider’s response to them, the text critiques their inherent validity. Natalia’s uncertainty about studying in college, given her talent and desire, shocks Pablo. “Se quedó pasmado de que, queriendo yo, admitiera la duda de estudiar carrera o dejarla de estudiar. Dijo que era absurdo” (212; ch. 13). Natalia also expresses a lack of understanding, which clarifies itself through Pablo’s questioning and her inability to answer them satisfactorily. She writes, “Me siguió preguntando cosas, y lo de papá no lo entendía, aunque la verdad es que tampoco lo entiendo yo” (p. 211), and later, “me daba rabia no saberle contestar bien, casi sólo con balbuceos y frases sin terminar, con lo claros que eran en cambio sus argumentos y la razón que tenía” (212). When they arrive at her house, Pablo invites her to continue the conversation over coffee, and she automatically refuses. Later, however, she regrets this decision and tries to find him on the street. Her change of heart comes when she realizes “lo maravilloso que era que me hubiera invitado” (213), how marvelous that a male teacher respected her humanity and wanted to continue trying to understand a situation that seemed senseless to him. While

Natalia did not find Pablo on the street that day, the conversation affected her deeply, causing her to question the inexplicable “rules” for females in her family that she had beforehand simply endured.

While the reader can easily focus on the characters and relationship of the dramatized narrators as the most obvious points of social critique, the story itself spreads its attention among several characters, most unmarried young women of good social standing in Salamancan society. Joan Lipman Brown argues that Martín Gaité makes evident the confining nature of the society in “the contrasts which have emerged throughout the work, especially between the conformist characters who populate the town, with their incessant concern over *lo que dirán [lo demás]*, and the individuals whose unique struggles shed light on how the social system functions” (169). Without the panorama of characters interacting within their societal restrictions, the nonconformity of the few would lose much of its significance. Furthermore, many young women struggle and suffer because of their conformity, even as Natalia suffers in her nonconformity. The details are different for each, but the “mosaic” effect of their combined stories reveals the commonality of the negative effects of an oppressive, restrictive society on the individual’s character and personal development. Gertru, Elvira, and Julia are pressured in various ways by their *novios* to give up parts of themselves or to change in order to meet their loved ones’ expectations. In the absence of male interest, or in comparison to more “attractive” women, Mercedes and Goyita must deal with feelings of inferiority in a society that values women primarily through their connection to men. Rosa and Alicia must deal with the further limitations imposed on lower-class women.

While seemingly less consistently and deeply developed than some characters, Gertru plays an important role as a contrast to Natalia, a contrast appearing in both Natalia's and the heterodiegetic voice's narrations. The two young women are close in age and social situation, and were once best friends. Gertru shows where Natalia could be if she submitted to society's ideals for her. When Natalia first introduces Gertru, she seems disappointed in her friend's "growing up" —she writes that Gertru declined a boat ride for fear of wrinkling her dress, and she comments that "se había pintado un poco los ojos y a mí me parecía que se iba a avergonzar de que se lo notase" (49). Gertru becomes engaged to Ángel, a womanizing captain of the air force over ten years her senior. Primarily through dialogue, the heterodiegetic voice shows Ángel treating her as a child to be trained authoritatively rather than as an adult and an equal. For example, Ángel's words reveal his attitude when he reprimands her for the *bocadillo casero*. At first, Gertru fights back; multiple times, she tries to make him acknowledge the care she had wanted to express in making him a sandwich when he said he was hungry. She eventually gives in to Ángel's evidently double standards, which allow him to say, "te tienes que acostumbrar a que te riña alguna vez" (179) and "no me digas lo que tengo que saber hacer" (180) in the same conversation, and then scold her for crying, adding "lo hago por tu bien, para enseñarte a quedar siempre en el lugar que te corresponde" (180). After this, Gertru stays in "her place," having realized that Ángel does not want a relationship but a pawn.

Apart from Natalia, Elvira seems to fight most against societal restrictions. She boasts about being a free spirit. Natalia only meets her briefly at the cemetery on All Saints' Day, but both other narrators represent her. Pablo also first meets her in relation

to her father's death, and he seems intrigued and taken aback by her initial intensity. When they first face each other in the recently emptied entryway to the Domínguez residence, Pablo comments, "Me turbé porque sus ojos brillaban demasiado, igual que con fiebre" (p. 90; ch. 4). After she realizes the connection between him and an old photo that her father kept, she launches into a lament about her frustrated hopes to travel abroad. Pablo narrates indirectly, after explaining that it had left him quite confused.

"Que un viaje le puede cambiar a uno la vida, hacérsela ver de otra manera y a ella ese año se la habría cambiado. Le pregunté que por qué no había ido, pero no me contestó directamente.

—Si usted no vive aquí —dijo—, no puede entender ciertas cosas."
(91)

Elvira's desperation to escape the strictures of Salamancan society and to free herself from its influences on her personal development shines through even the uncomprehending outside voice of Pablo.⁷ Her last comment also hints to both Pablo and the reader that there is something different, even ominous, about the society of that provincial town. To this point, Pablo seems more confused than repelled. However, after receiving an awkward letter from her, Pablo's attitude sours. His subjective experience impedes him from empathizing with her in a way that does not occur with others about whom he narrates. In the final chapters, we see her pressured into marriage with Emilio through a plan of emotional manipulation that Pablo concocts and Emilio enacts. Thus, as influenced by Pablo's actions and reflected by his narrating, Elvira's initial expressions of self ultimately betray her, and she succumbs to social expectations that a woman marry.

⁷ While Elvira's desperation is felt on a personal level, in the loss of her travel plans at the death of her father, her rant is not devoid of political context. The Franco regime severely restricted travel by Spanish citizens — restrictions that obviously did not affect Pablo.

Other women also struggle against or suffer under the specific forms of oppression directed at them. Julia is forced to choose between the two authority figures in her life: her father and her future husband, both of whom disregard her autonomy by trying to control her actions. Women without significant others fare no better. Mercedes has become bitter and rigid as an old maid in a society that values a woman for the marriage she can make. Goyita's new friend Toñuca steals her love-interest, thereby making her feel inferior because a male finds her less socially suave or sexually appealing. Judgments of inferiority are more overt when applied to the working class; both women and men shun Rosa, the *animadora* at the casino, except for those seeking a sexual encounter, and only Pablo manages to treat her as a human being. Tali's family distains her friendship with Alicia, who lives with her stepmother, an overworked hairdresser and has a room divided from other spaces only by curtains, not real walls. Alicia will have to work after finishing her *bachillerato*, perhaps as an elementary teacher since she has limited options for a "decent" job as a poorer woman.

In addition to the mosaic tiles of each individual's story, the narrator focuses on specific spaces to underscore the larger theme of restriction. The narrator offers details on the use of space at the Instituto Femenino to reflect the society's respective value for the education of males and females. The Instituto shares a campus with a seminary, which had originally ceded a much larger portion of the buildings and grounds to the school for girls. Since then, the seminary had been taking back portions of the campus, "como si lo reconquistaran" (234), until this year, the seminary took a floor from the Instituto's already isolated building, and commandeered rights to the stairs, as well. When a gong signals that seminarians may be using the stairs, students at the Instituto

must refrain from leaving the floor that they are on so as not to have contact with these males in a religious institution. The disparity between the two educational institutions also reveals itself in the heating. While the seminary has plenty of coal to heat its rooms, the Instituto continually waits for some Ministry or other to approve purchases of coal (233). Pablo poignantly envisions the situation in military terms, comparing the girls to soldiers holed up in a war refuge. “Todo en aquel edificio me recordaba un refugio de guerra, un cuartel improvisado. Hasta las alumnas me parecían soldados, casi siempre de dos en dos por los pasillos, mirando, a través del ventanal, cómo jugaban al fútbol los curitas” (234). Just as Natalia looks out the window to the parade below in chapter 1, the students, confined to a small and poorly supplied area of campus, can only look on as male seminarians enjoy space outside and warm classrooms.

Space in a larger sense also figures into an unspoken critique in the novel. As Pablo observes at the Instituto, men and women are often divided physically along invisible lines in what Marsha Collins calls, “sexual segregation” (69). At Gertru’s engagement party, for example, Natalia observes that the men discuss business in one room and the women cluster to chat in another. Often, interior space becomes an image of restrictions for women. While Pablo explores the town at will, the women stay primarily indoors; when they are outside, they are usually only walking from one approved location to another. Even the title, “entre visillos,” implies someone looking out a window through the partial protection of lace curtains. In chapter 1, Natalia confirms that this is a feminine image. Pressured to watch the parade that passes by the house, she goes to the window, where she “levant[a] un poco el visillo,” peeking at the outside world (51).

In a context of censorship and protest against restriction, what is unsaid in a novel becomes as important as that which is actually stated. Adrián García speaks to the interplay between the narrative and its gaps, saying, “[Martín Gaité’s] narratives lead the reader to fill in silences of discourse and story and, in the process, to concretize implied feminist messages” (García 2). Although his analysis focuses on feminist protest in *Entre visillos*, García acknowledges other forms of “negativity” (13) or implicit communication in the narrative, as well. This idea of leaving gaps for the reader to fill ties in with Kronik’s mosaic idea, whereby the reader must “splice” the multiple narrative threads together in order to see the full social critique. Like narrative irony, narrative silences are only fully actualized when the reader realizes their significance. These gaps also allow for the maieutic ideal, explored in relation to *Niebla*, which allows the reader to form a deeper meaning than is explicitly stated in the text. *Entre visillos* plays with narrative negativity in multiple ways. Regarding the regime, for example, the only direct mention of the dictator is Franco’s portrait at the Instituto (p. 131; ch. 8), and characters only briefly mention the war. Some connections are implied, though not stated. Frieda Blackwell points out, “that Natalia’s father, a ‘negociante adinerado’ or ‘wealthy business man’ according to Pablo, made a fortune in wolfram (tungsten) mining subtly links him to the Franco regime,” because Franco exported tungsten to Hitler (12). The reader must draw the connections between his conservative politics and his support for the regime’s patriarchal social structure.

The narrative silence of the female first-person narrator Natalia in comparison to the male first-person narrator Pablo and the sexless heterodiegetic voice implies the restriction placed on women’s voices in the larger society. Natalia narrates less than two

and a half chapters, while Pablo narrates seven chapters and the third-person voice narrates eight and a half. Many critics consider Natalia the protagonist of the work, yet she is only given voice in a very limited manner. Much of her story is related through others' eyes, or through the undramatized narrator's voice, sometimes indirectly expressing her perspective. When she does speak, her narratives read as journal entries, which create the impression of something personal, not written for others' eyes. Natalia herself guards her journal from the maid's discovery in chapter 1. Thus, even in her narrating, Natalia's manner is one of restriction rather than sharing freely.

Natalia's experience embodies silence in other ways, as well. After the conversation in which Pablo and Natalia discuss Natalia's family, she decides to talk with her father. When she goes to his room to speak with him one evening, he thinks she has come to scratch his back. This leads to a poignant image, because while they talk, she is kneeling before him while he faces away from her. After describing how she confronts him on the growing restriction and distance she feels, Natalia evaluates where the situation left them. "Estaba muy dolido, pero no comprende que yo lo que quiero es ayudarle a ser más sincero, a darse cuenta de lo que tiene alrededor. No he conseguido que nos entendamos, he visto que es imposible y también toda su cobardía" (p. 254; ch. 16). She desires to help her father be more sincere, to see what is going on around him. She reaches out, but her words only serve to hurt him. "He visto que es imposible," she says, having lost hope of being heard. When her father asks her what she wants from him, she responds incoherently, and in the end, she never mentions her desire to study in the university. Even Natalia's most courageous act of breaking the silence leads only to

pain, isolation, and the realization that she cannot escape her silent restriction if others refuse to hear her.

All of the narrators fall silent regarding Natalia's future, leaving the end of the novel unresolved. They refuse, or are unable, to give Natalia a concrete future either of successfully choosing her own path by studying *ciencias naturales* at university, or of continued restriction in the wake of Pablo's abandonment of the Instituto, which leaves her surrounded by a family and society that do not allow for women's autonomy. She has tried once to reach out to her father, and she has failed. Despite her discouragement, the immediacy of Natalia's narrative style allows for a future change of heart and further attempts to talk with her father, or perhaps the discovery of other methods of seeking change. While critics regard the ending with varying degrees of hope for Natalia, its silence about her future communicates her vulnerability and isolation in her current position, underlining the real situation of every woman portrayed in the novel.

Through silence and speech, through the "objective" depiction of characters' lives, and through the interweaving of three narrative voices, *Entre visillos* works around the censorship imposed on it to critique the restrictive society prevalent in Franco Spain. The non-gendered heterodiegetic voice acts as a camera or microphone, recording clips of society without commentary, and Pablo and Natalia narrate in surprisingly objective modes, as well. However, the scenes and dialogues that they portray amass to form a harsh critique on the restrictive roles assigned to women and the objectifying treatment they receive from men. Each individual story contributes to the overall message. Furthermore, the work's silence on certain topics, including the political situation and Natalia's future, become poignant markers of the limitation and uncertainty in Spanish

society of the 1950's. Natalia's narrative voice is comparatively small; she cannot defend her family norms when questioned by Pablo about her future education, nor can she speak up to her father about her desire for a university career. While men may speak for themselves, as Pablo does in seven chapters, women have exceedingly limited opportunities to tell their stories in their own voices, forced instead to rely on others (the third-person narrator) to speak for them. Each of these pieces adds to the novel's mosaic of oppressive silence and monotony of life for women in provincial Spanish society, a portrait that mercilessly critiques the Regime's patriarchy.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Meaning in a text forms in the interaction between the reader and the printed page, and the narrative voice plays a crucial role in the reader's understanding and reception of the text. Does the narrator express concern or derision for the characters in the story? Does he/she encourage the reader to do the same? Is he/she believable? While the reader often focuses on the story rather than its narration, the mode of communicating the story influences the reader's interpretation of the text. Narrative styles also change, and the role that the narrator takes in a work often reflects in some way the society from which that work emerges. In any social context, however, the narrator can support or subvert the story's apparent signification, adding new layers of meaning to the text.

Many critics and theorists have written about the narrator, adding to a vocabulary that allows for more careful narrative analysis. Wayne Booth separates the narrator from the implied author, a critical distinction particularly when one encounters an unreliable narrator. The author's projection in a single work (the implied author) and in multiple works (the career author) also differ while simultaneously informing each other. In addition, Booth defines narrators based on their distance from the story that they narrate and their level of objectivity or omniscience. Gérard Genette distinguishes between the narrator and the point of view. Because narrators can focalize through another character, presenting someone else's perspective while maintaining their own voice, it is important to note the difference between "who sees" and "who speaks" in a text. Genette also

nuances the term “narrative,” applying the terms “story,” “narrative,” and “narrating” to clarify its different levels and meanings. Although not specifically related to narratological studies, Jacques Derrida reminds us that all discourse undermines itself and cannot communicate a message without mitigating it in some way, nor denounce a history of thought without borrowing from it. He reminds the critic of the contrived nature of both literature and literary criticism, and of the impossibility of perfection in either. Mikhail Bakhtin argues for the dialogic essence of the novel, inasmuch as the text brings together multiple voices to form a dialogue on multiple levels, while also calling on various aspects of the social context that gives it birth.

When taking a narrative approach to the Spanish novel between the years of 1884 and 1957, the reader must keep in mind both the wide array of nuances possible in the narrator’s role and the larger context that surrounds the work. In *La de Bringas* (1884), Benito Pérez Galdós wields an ironic homodiegetic narrator whose critique of his contemporaries (in 1868) comments on the hypocrisies of Spain in the 1880’s, as well. The unnamed narrator describes his own actions occasionally, but for the most part he details the lives of the Bringas family and particularly the growing financial straits of Rosalía Bringas, whose personal troubles mirror the growing political tension in 1868, culminating in the exile of Isabel the Second. The narrator weaves various symbolic and ironic connections between the Bringases and the royal family, and his pen casts a satiric shadow on almost every character it presents. In fact, of all the characters, the narrator seems to respect only Refugio Sánchez Emperador, a figure from the lower class whom Rosalía despises.

The narrator acts omniscient in his portrayal of Rosalía's thoughts and conversations, and he seems to want the reader to think of him as an alterodiegetic narrator who sits above the hypocrisy around him. Indeed, he goes to unknown lengths to remove his role from the story. However, at the end of the novel he reveals his involvement with the political coup and hints at a much more intimate relationship with Rosalía than he previously acknowledged. Besides questions of reliability that come up throughout the novel, that contrast his role as a character in the novel with his apparent omniscience, his own hypocrisy in ironizing others for behaviors in which he participates undercuts both his commentary and the reader's interpretation of the text up to that point. Rather, it reinforces the implied author's criticism of Spanish society as a whole, especially its hypocrisy.

Unlike *La de Bringas*'s social critique, *Niebla* utilizes a complicated, unreliable narrator in an emphatically dialogic novel to reflect a deeply individual philosophical exploration. Miguel de Unamuno published *Niebla* in 1914, less than twenty years after Spain's loss of empire, during a time when the national identity crisis raised questions of individual identity, as well. The novel follows Augusto Pérez, a naïve young man who faces theoretical, practical, and ontological questions in his quest for meaning and love. The main narrator of the work is ostensibly Unamuno himself, but Unamuno the narrator and character distinguishes himself from the implied and career authors by entering into the diegetic level and undermining his position of authority in his dialogues with characters. This culminates when Augusto visits him in Salamanca and the two debate Augusto's existence and, ultimately, Unamuno's own reality.

For most of the text, however, the narrator manifests himself indirectly, as an undramatized voice, representing and occasionally lightly ironizing characters and their conversation. Other characters also narrate portions of the novel; Augusto's best friend Victor Goti writes the prologue (to which Unamuno offers a hotly-worded post-prologue), and Augusto's dog Orfeo narrates the epilogue, lamenting the hypocrisy embedded in humanity. Others narrate interpolated stories, and the emphasis on conversation adds to the heavily dialogic nature of the novel. It gives the impression that existential truth cannot be approached in a monologic, overly confident way. Rather, authentic life can only be sought in a multiplicity of voices, and in holding onto the conflict between faith, reason, and doubt.

Entre visillos (1958) uses the narrative voice not for philosophical, but, like *La de Bringas*, for social criticism. Restricted by rigid censorship under the Franco dictatorship, Carmen Martín Gaité employs a neo-realist style to present a "slice of life" under the regime, ostensibly objectively, which criticizes by showing how bad the situation in provincial Spain is without directly critiquing the dictatorship or its values. The use and manipulation of three narrative voices — one male, one female, and one undramatized and sexless — contributes to the negative image of life that they each present. While the sexless, heterodiegetic voice narrates nine chapters and the male voice seven, the female protagonist and narrator only narrates directly in two chapters. Furthermore, the dialogues between characters and the situations that affect them depict images of the restriction and objectification to which women of the time were subjected. For example, Natalia cannot even address her desire to study at the university level with her father, because he refuses to see a problem with the gender-roles in their family and is

hurt when she tries to bring it up. The division of interior and exterior spaces along gender lines also presents an image of confinement in domestic spaces for the women of the novel while males move through open, public spaces. The novel's noticeable silence on certain topics, such as the Franco regime, adds to the commentary through its poignant absence. All of these pieces, including silence, combine to form a sort of mosaic in the mind of the reader. While the individual pieces could be interpreted as insignificant, once the reader puts them together the conglomeration forms a persuasive critique.

While all narrators share certain narratological tools, each uses them in unique ways. For example, dialogue plays a part in all of the narrators' repertoires. Of the 3 novels, the narrator in *La de Bringas* summarizes or disparages the dialogue of other characters more often than the later narrators, but he also uses the format of direct dialogue to make his point, even transcribing a conversation as if it were a script to turn the speakers into actors, which underlines their hypocrisy. *Niebla* elevates dialogue to the point of distinguishing a new genre of literature, the *nivola*, largely due to its technique for giving the voice to its characters through conversation; this in turn creates the dialogic atmosphere necessary to the development of Unamuno's philosophic ideas. *Entre visillos* also relies heavily on dialogue, but instead of using it to overtly ironize its characters or to present multiple ontological perspectives, the narrators use dialogue as a way to avoid their own subjectivity. They choose which conversations and situations to share, but direct quotations allow the characters to condemn themselves while the narrators maintain a façade of objectivity.

All of the novels involve narrators that act on the diegetic level, as well. The dramatized narrator manifests itself uniquely to fit each work's individual message. The

anonymous narrator in *La de Bringas* needs his subjectivity for the irony of the piece to work. He is able to satirize society and individuals because of his personal experience with both, and his powerful self-ironization emerges because of his unreliability as a seemingly omniscient character-narrator who misses pieces of information, falls asleep in a scene he narrates, and conceals important information from the reader. In *Niebla*, Unamuno also plays with an unreliable narrator, who is a projection of the author himself. While the narrator Unamuno expresses his sense of superiority to his characters, some of the events and conversations he narrates subvert his confidence and ironize not only the narrator, but the implied author and implied reader, as well. The narrators of *Entre visillos*, on the other hand, strive to appear as reliable narrators, despite the dramatized nature of Pablo and Natalia, and other than a surprisingly keen memory for exact dialogue the two never narrate more than they could be expected to know. This objectivity is crucial to establish their trustworthiness as narrators of a social reality with self-evident implications. Because of this need for trustworthiness, and the distanced narrative style of neo-realism, even the autodiegetic narrations of Natalia and Pablo maintain a more informational tone than the clearly opinionated narrators of Galdós and Unamuno.

The narrative voice can influence a work's reception and signification in both obvious and subtle ways. The narrator functions differently in each of these novels, but it unquestionably contributes significantly to the meaning of the works as a whole. In *La de Bringas*, the ironic narrator mocks contemporary society, but his ultimate self-ironization calls into question everything that he said before, as well as adding to the intensity of the social critique, in that even the criticizer is corrupt. *Niebla* questions

authentic existence, raising doubts about reality and fiction by using multiple voices that jumble into a cacophony of philosophical ideas; the author's existence as a work of fiction, particularly a fallible one, greatly enhances the novel's dialogic exploration of the quest for an authentic individual identity. *Entre visillos* uses three narrative voices to share multiple perspectives on the narrow existence that the dictatorship allowed women in provincial Spain. Furthermore, the use of a first-person male voice or an undramatized narrator in all but two chapters points to the way the regime prohibited women from speaking for themselves. The different approaches to narrating in each of these novels serve as a foundation on which their respective stories and themes develop. The importance of the narrator to understanding a work extends beyond these three novels. A broader study of the narrative voice in the Spanish novel would reveal myriad narrators, each telling his or her story uniquely and each informing its meaning, its reflection of a broader society, and its reception by the reader.

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