Sofía Casanova and the First World War. Changing the Public Sphere

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ABSTRACT: Sofía Casanova was a Spanish journalist and a Red Cross voluntary during World War One. Her chronicles were published by right wing diary ABC. Sofía Casanova was married with polish philosopher Wicenty Lutoslawski since 1887, lived at Polonia, and it is able to think about her as a “regular” middle-up class woman. However, if it is developed a biographic approach and it is focused in Casanova’s representations about both public and private spheres during Great War, some differences show up. Between 1914 and 1918, there was an irregular modification in gender system. The war impact in every-day life was an asymmetric modification of public-private boundaries. That historical phenomenon also depended on gender cross-wise categories as class, religion and nationalism. Sofía Casanova was in rear of the eastern front: she was both a witness and a principal actor in all those events that modified public sphere.

KEYWORDS: Feminism; Journalism; Empowerment; Catholicism; Bolshevik Revolution; Citizenship.

THE PATH BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE

The ways in which private and public spheres are represented, and how these practices and discourses are linked to political capability are the protagonists of this partial biography. For this purpose I have made use of feminist theoretical explorations, and so drawn out, in the case of a specific woman and her precise historic context—one of enormous fragility and deep changes—some of the possible forms of hierarchal organization relevant to accessing “things political”. Although my main concern has been gender, I have tried to not leave aside, in this
shaping, the involvement of other decisive determinants: class, race and ethnicity, all of them intertwined, as well as transversally and permanently marked by the gender category (Canning, 2006: 15). In this manner I have attempted to make the best use of an extraordinary determinant for social relationships: World War I, understanding it as the main context and a decisive marker from which to trace out a meaningful analysis of Sofía Casanova’s historic experience. Therefore, my exploration is centred on the years between 1914 and 1918.

What is public opinion and what is its power in creating public space? What benefits might be obtained from contemplating public opinion through a historic study, and how might a historian obtain such benefits? How, ultimately, might we value these? The private/public dichotomy, that initially takes us back to Habermas, responding as it does to the materialization of certain historic and cultural privileges of a subject’s specific actions, and whose ultimate importance is determined by elements of gender, race and class, that would regulate access to “the political”. These elements would hierarchically and discriminatingly determine the possibilities of access on varying degrees for different subjects and are at the same time sensitive to cultural modifications and historic circumstances (Armstrong, 1991: 23-27).

In order for this to be analytically relevant through a microscopic study, as is the case presently —in a work that is distant from a narrative biography—I deemed it necessary to introduce a theoretic tool for situating the changes and twists of normalized and ruling representations of the public/private coupling. For this purpose I undertook the effort through the works of authors as different from one another as are Hannah Arendt, Judith Butler (Arendt, 2003; Butler, 2001). With them it has already been concluded here that observing the ways in which subjects approach the limits of historic representation of public and private, we discover how possibilities of political capacitance appear. Therefore, it would be not only possible, but also obligatory, from this exercise in historiography, to situate the specific —and privileged— place of such processes of change in action and their results, of varying duration and reversibility, on transformation and answer. In other words, it would be a question of closely following what we commonly know as empowerment processes, appropriation of opportunities, in the process of which individuals gain access to the public sphere while transforming it (Davidoff, 1998: 168).

I have used this premise, or basic line of argument, as a guide, in order to move through the abundant documentation generated by a character such as Sofía Casanova and the historic writing composed around her. I have also taken into account the general consensus, or assumed convention, that World War I, being a linking of events that, penetrated by historic processes well under way prior to the summer of 1914, would have given cause to, and assisted, because of many special conditions, said processes of empowerment as well as providing an opportunity for previously limited political subjects —women especially. At this point a warning is necessary: the changes occurred between 1914 and 1918, in relation to public sphere and women, were very much unequal, and in many cases not long lasting (Doan, 2006: 339).

After the demobilisation which took place in Europe after the armistice of November 1918, the strain on the gender system remained once the war crisis had passed. In view of the discourses which emanated from the political and social authorities, that which was directly or indirectly connected to the various feminist disputes of the day was perceived as a threat to social peace (Kent, 2009: 150). Women’s continuing admission into the suffrage and the participation of some of them in the parliament were historical events which were rooted in pre-1914 developments and which had different political implications during the Great War under special crisis circumstances (Beddoe, 1989). It could be argued that the period between 1914 and 1918 or 1921 had an impact on the chances of change, and of resistance to women’s political empowerment, which existed before the assassination of Franz Ferdinand.

As Erika Kuhlman noted in 2008, and despite institutionalised attempts to end the social instability which emerged from the strain on the gender system, “the question of what a woman’s proper place was in society, whether as a wife and mother, a working member of society, or as a full and equal citizen, or all three, remained unclear when the war ended” (Kuhlman, 2008: 144). To provide a broader view, this key controversy could be supplemented with a perspective from “the other side”. In her work on the different forms of sociability and daily life for women across the class spectrum, Pamela Horn highlighted something which is essential to day-to-day operation in modern societies: the quest for normalcy. Frequently, that normalcy was equated to what existed before summer 1914—or rather, to an interpretation thereof. Thus, and despite the feeling of autonomy and the frequent perception that this political empowerment was caused by the war’s labour opportunities, many women wished a return to an idealised past (Horn, 2010: 25). In it, the gender system also continued the hierarchicalisation of sexual differentiation between public and private, productive and reproductive. These considerations appear very frequently in the many texts written by women who were protagonists of the First World War (Cardinal et al., 1999; Smith, 2000), or in women’s collective imaginary about the war (Tylee, 2000, 1990).

Furthermore, we should take into account the distinctive features of the war on the eastern front, where Sofía Casanova was involved. In Russia, historiographically and as a product of memory, “the First World War has been a largely forgotten episode in modern Russian history, serving as merely a backdrop to the complicating event of 1917”. Nevertheless, historian Peter Gatrell spoke in these terms about the identification of productive and reproductive duties during the war and the perception of harmful consequences for gender destabilisation:

Since feminine duty was deemed to lie in the case and treatment of wounded soldiers, it was but a short sleep.
towards the assertion of feminine obligation towards other victims of war. The articulation of concern for family integrity also implied the partial feminisation of public discourse. Russian women asserted the right to get involved, precisely because issues of household collapse and reconstitution were at stake (Gatrell, 2003: 199-204).

And if therefore it is not possible to speak of a homogeneous and irreversible process of access to public platforms for women during World War I, it is not possible either to conclude with a linear and uniform balance on the experience of Sofía Casanova in this sense. Neither, by extension, can we find a firm and fixed consistency in how she represented the private and the public through the war. A quick glance, inevitably superficial, would lead us to conclude that there was in her a positive attitude inclined to modifying the limits of her journalist and writer elements, that would priorities in her behavior a “feminist” determination (in an “equality with males” sense) linked to certain aspects of her character made possible by the transformations she underwent during this critical period. This stance would become naturally aligned attending to gender, race and class criteria. Through this, relevant determinants born of the Great War would define the position of the author of Doctor Wolski (1894), and would push her evolution, as can be made out from her texts published in ABC. Said determinants would explain the changes inserted into her representations, because Sofía Casanova did not intend to modify the normal order of gender relationships through her practice and discourse (Shapiro, 1992: 2).

Even so, and in spite of the irregular reach (and many times circumstantial) of the changes brought on by the context of war, and in this specific case also by the Bolshevik Revolution (a very important factor in Sofía Casanova’s case, as in others), a fact can in no way be ignored: throughout the war modulations occurred that gave way to political capacitance of the then ABC reporter, forcing her towards a transformation of her own limits of public sphere representation1. In this sense, many contradictions can be identified between the discourse and the action of Sofía Casanova, even within her own discourses and actions, contradictions that prove that some changes were of varying occurrence, on one hand, and on the other warn of how hard it is to compose a closed and stable narrative when writing biographic analyses or undertaking hermeneutic assessments on identity (Long, 1999: 104).

The biography, undertaken from a feminist perspective, has allowed room to centre on the problems that involved, precisely because issues of household collapse and reconstitution were at stake (Gatrell, 2003: 199-204).

Concerning the essence of the process, there was not what we might call a structural change, a radical or revolutionary twist in the way that Sofía Casanova represented public space or what might have been her own role in it all through World War I. But there was a multitude of small (and not so small) variations of focuses and nuances, both in the writings and the actions of the Galician writer, war correspondent and solidary nurse of that time. Those changes fostered a political empowerment in Sofía Casanova, an important enabling in the political sphere that allowed her to actively participate in activities where the new social ruling was negotiated. Also, and at the same time, or perhaps subsequently, within her arose a series of resistances against some of the general variations in the representation of public space of that moment (Lawrance, 2007: 280-281).

LINKING PRODUCTIVE AND REPRODUCTIVE LABOUR

Amid the social and cultural maelstrom that was the return to Spain of the “heroin” of the Bolshevik Revolution, Eduardo Haro described Sofía Casanova in his interview for La Mañana in April 1919: “Cuando estrechamos la mano de Sofía Casanova, sentimos la emoción de halarnos ante un héroe.”2 Years later, Dr. Novoa Santos, while going over his latest medicine conferences, said of the Galician journalist:

Sofía Casanova, al término de mi conferencia anterior vino a decirme muy quedamente que ella, a pesar de ser la mujer como una forma neolítica quería persistir en ella. Pero Sofía Casanova, mujer acaída en un paisaje esencialmente femenino, el de nuestra común Galicia, apenas vislumbró la exposición y desarrollo de mi conferencia, porque decir a la mujer que tiene forma neolítica es lo mismo que deslizar un piropo en su nido. Formas larvarias de ciertas hembras animales contrastan en su forma sutil y airosa, en su gracilidad, con las formas densas y bastas de los machos. Constituye la mujer un tipo angelical, y este es el mayor piropo que puede ofrecerse, ya que el piropo al fin no es más que la expresión de una exaltación marcada de la feminidad.3

It is a definition which Sofía Casanova still liked a decade after World War One ended: the supremacy of essentialism as a means to define reality; the commitment to the continuation of the social, and thus sexual, order. How did Sofía Casanova transition from her moral and political prominence, inherited from the war, to her defence of an essentialised identity of femininity in the framework of the relation between social production and reproduction? This is what I will try to address here.

I will list the series of changes, variations, and also resistances to the aforementioned, in the public disposition and in the private, a conservative vision of the social situation, shared by Sofía Casanova before the war.4 I will present them articulated by the two core themes, specifically signalling the matters I consider the most relevant. I will speak above all about the emerging representations
concerning productive and reproductive labour, to end by approaching the idea modelled around the creation of citizenship and life in society. During World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution, Sofía Casanova spent her time between her work as an ABC journalist, her voluntary work as a Red Cross nurse, and taking care of her own family. Nationalism, religion and the essential order of the gender system and the social sphere, were the elements that shaped her reflections on the creation of citizen concepts and practices: “Muchas damas polacas de alcurnia son enfermeras a lado de jóvenes humildes y, vistiendo el blanco delantal y el pañuelo blanco en la cabeza, todas grandes señoras y modestas mujeres, parecen iguales ante la magnitud del dolor que deben activar.”

She practised a form of journalism that would fit into what is known as “new journalism”, the leading protagonist in the great headlines of written press, since the end of the 19th century: a style that mixed political essay with “human and emotional” questions, derived from political and social reality, whose consequences, hypothetical and real, were analysed in each published text or written piece (Chambers et al., 2004: 20). From that mainstream literary journalism, Casanova used the means of socialisation typical of her class, education, profession and, above all, gender, in order to shape the sources of information that fed her articles. In that social and cultural aspect, and through the interpretation of what journalism meant to her, and from the social medium from which she hailed—and formed part of—rest many of the existing tensions that lie in the limits articulating public space, from her point of view. But, Pero “los periódicos no traen una línea de cuanto vemos en la ciudad [...]”

Sofía Casanova laboured on the border between the public and private, according to the limits drawn—and erased—by salon meetings where she would mingle with aristocrats, writers, military men and politicians of both sexes, and it was in these spaces that she gave shape to her options for political enabling. She would interiorise these spaces of sociability in a manner typical for women (women-mothers, in the full expression of such function: women that educate), directed and organised by them in spite of the variety and mix of subjects dealt with in these reunions, subjects that on the whole were proper of one sex or another. But the journalist and writer, still very much connected to her Spanish homeland, attentive mother and wife to a Polish aristocrat, nonetheless took part in conversations about both geopolitics or charity, and did so indifferently with men or women.

However, the important thing in this case is to emphasise the use and meaning that Sofía Casanova gave to these dialogues, and the perspective she took on depending on the gender of whoever she might talk to, and the manner in which these conversations appeared reflected in her ABC newspaper articles: “Un diputado amigo ha venido desde la Duma a referirme lo que aún no es oficialmente público. El Zar ha abdicado [...] y me llega el rumor de que no le fueron entregados los despachos de la Duma.” In them she would grant herself the condition of a complex woman, a woman writer rather than a journalist, and so maintained the tension of constant ambiguity—a classic rhetorical device employed by women of the Ancient Regime—in the face of the supposed value of her political opinions and statements, humbling herself by identifying, along with her fellow conversationists, with the frontier context of salon society: a world where one was sworn to secrecy and intimacy along with all the other participants (Landes, 1988: 24-28). In this sense Sofía Casanova made use of an able strategy that avoided confrontation during geopolitical discussions with men, and, also, kept herself in the precise place that she had situated herself within the hierarchal order of authority and capacity in matters related to “the political”: “El general Ivanow, mi buen amigo de Varsovia, me ha dicho en breve conversación que no estoy autorizada a repetir y otras cosas que son un secreto.”

To be able to understand this social phenomenon as an integral part of Sofía Casanova’s social appearances in salons and how she managed to transfer this to the public opinion through how she presented these meetings in her ABC articles, demands that we take into consideration what the Galician writer thought of journalism and her ideological projections. Her doubts while revealing “intimacies” that had come to light through salon conversations offer us a complex panoramic of the modulation of intersection between public and private that occurred during World War I, occasionally, due to the exceptionality of what was being experienced and lived. Therefore, Journalism and press are continuously present elements in families’ daily life—we must not forget that in spite of being inserted within Polish high class, she never ceased to be a foreigner—vectors that regulated debates on Polish society and Politics; because of this she felt responsible when the moment came to reveal the information she had gathered, fearful of going too far and wanting, therefore, to protect the confidentiality of her sources: in that manner, she believed, correct political debate was favoured. It was all about “demostrar las mentiras de la guerra.”

Even so, a mission or public labour that went beyond her impressions prior to the start of the war, was attributed to Casanova, concerning what should have been done—what was possible for a woman within the public sphere to do—but at the same time did not hideaway her fluctuating ambiguity regarding her own capacities to judge and her precise role, while participating in these reunions, considering she was a woman. It was the extraordinary character of the war and disturbances of the war that now demanded a higher political predisposition—or at least that is how Sofía Casanova understood it—however, this inclination was not simply born of her condition as an individual or a subject. There was not within her a complete consciousness for quality regarding human beings, and the capacity to speak and act: “Es mi triste caso, exponer opiniones propias, hacer comentarios o deducciones políticas fuera pecar mortalmente. Será pecado menos repetir lo que otros dicen en público, y por este procedimiento me acuso.”

On 24 March 1919, the newspaper La Acción devoted a few lines to the Galician journalist moments before her
arrival in Madrid after leaving the new Bolshevik Russia:
“Sofía Casanova, espectadora de la trágica contienda eu-
ropea, ha sabido hacer sus preciosas crónicas de la guerra,
consciente de su labor de periodista e informadora, con la
mayor neutralidad y desapasonamiento.” Duality and
ambiguity, problems which stemmed from the majority
discourse when trying to pigeonhole Sofía Casanova’s
work as a journalist, since aesthetics and irrationality
stood out as much as her professionalism, were also cen-
tral to the Galician writer’s representation of public vs.
private and productive vs. reproductive.

Because of her ideological tradition and education, the
differences between publishable and non-publishable, were
part of the argumentative core of what she considered to be
journalism; from there springs the importance of the
changes in the status that occurred during the years of war
and revolution. The importance given to the events that oc-
curred within Sofía Casanova’s intimate and family space
is minimal in her ABC work until the outbreak of the Bol-
shevik Revolution. It is the execution of her family —her
brothers-in-law— that changes her point of view concern-
ing the insertion of personal matters as a relative element
for public and political debate: “Dada la señal de ascender
al piso alto, precipitanse mujeres, viejos y criaturas al an-
cho corredor de las celdas herméticas. Al ventanillo enre-
jado asomanse los rostros de los recluidos, y desde una dis-
tancia de tres metros está permitido hablarles.”

This way, the possibility of going beyond her own lim-
its on representing public and private, where her activity
was clearly in the field of “the political”, grew when Sofía
Casanova came as close to the battlefields as possible; spe-
cially when the war touched so much on her private sphere,
that she herself was involved in the conflict. Sofía Casano-
va would project her daily experience in ABC articles, and
this allowed her the opportunity to stretch the limits of how
she normally represented things public and private through
the insertion of her family life into articles written for pub-
lication in the press. The exceptional situation created by
the war would serve as an excuse to justify any activity that
twisted and weakened these limits, be it because of things
she had lived, or that others had lived, in an emotional and
ideological manner. This special context forced her, ac-
cording to her own texts, to tell her own experience —her
complex and conflictive day-to-day— that she considered
worthy of becoming information useful for political debat-
ing. All of this, in spite of her doubt-filled considerations or
her frank stubbornness regarding subjectivity and the ob-
jective worth of her experience as a woman, when faced
with the weight of shedding light on the future of the war,
or on the revolutionary process underway in Russia: “Es-
crbo de tristezas, lector, en vez de entretenerse con femeni-
nas amenidades de las moscovitas. Lo haré en seguida,
continuando los esbozos que te presenté; pero hoy, la ame-
naza de que la guerra prosiga indefinidamente me sob-
brecoge y me desorienta.”

Sofía Casanova also undertook what was expected of
her as a female writer by the companies in charge of jour-
nalism: the introduction of the sentimental elements into
the narrative. Even so, questions on geopolitics, social or-
der or political revolution prevailed, sometimes in spite
of her (on some occasions we can read apologies written
by Casanova regarding the lack or total absence of femi-
ninity in the texts). Once again it was the situation
brought on by the war that forced the writer, according to
her point of view, to walk the path of professional masu-
linization. On this journey, the author of La Madeja
(1913) became politically capacitated only by the context
and as an exception, actively taking hold of public space,
but not of its essence. It is interesting to take into account
the relevance of her insisting apologies for having taken
on masculine professional capacities and discourses: “El
frente del Volga se alarga y es bella la lozanía de clavos
picos en el lomo del maximalismo intransigente.” Be-
cause of the way this apology is presented, it is hard to
totally assure whether it was a rhetorical device, or per-
haps a deeper and more imbedded personal strategy by
Casanova. However, everything points to the fact that it
may be taken as a practice similar to the one used by her
during salon reunions, in order to acquire sources for her
chronicles: “Ansía el espíritu aspectos nuevos de la vida
cotidiana; los ojos y la pluma, el reposo de ver y describir
a lo normal, costumbres, acciones de pueblos y gentes
civilizadoras, viviendo humanamente.”

Her interview of Leon Trotsky in the Smolny Institute
of Saint Petersburg can be taken as the most significant ex-
ample of surpassing the limits of public/private division in
her activity as a journalist. Once again, the event is pre-
sented as a need marked by the context of decisive events
and her duty as a journalist. But empowerment exists in
any case, and it materialises in this case through the com-
pany of another woman, her faithful servant Pepa, whose
subordinate nature will introduce class elements when be-
tween both women a hierarchy of political capacity devel-
ops. Through an example such as this it becomes clear how
Sofía Casanova had an active role in creating subordina-
tion relevant to public space access through the category of
social class that in this situation will function as a transver-
sal gender factor. Casanova understands that it is she who
must “be” the man in that moment; she would in fact define
her actions within the Smolny Institute as a “manly deed”
(it must still be considered that an activity such as that,
where gender is structured hierarchically, a public enabling
is arising for the journalist according to her gender). The
creation of a strong bond between the army’s sol-
diers and the nurses of the medical bodies is, as we know,
very relevant to this study. On one hand the traditional
female nurse labour of caring for the male’s body was re-
identified to care for soldiers. At the same time this union
would constitute a prime element within the discourse of
shared, common and patriotic effort; it was possible to
see, the caring and patriotic presence, within the public
sphere, of soldiers and nurses (Lee, 2006: 84; Rocham-
boy, 2006: 23-24). The way I see it, the perception of a
common effort is based on the sensitive and familiar ap-
proach towards the soldiers from nurses and war God-
mother —where they existed—all of which spoke of an
appropriation of the public space by widening the projec-
tion of labours tied to maternity.
In the aforementioned interview of April 1919, which was published in *La Mañana*, Sofía Casanova explained her discursive determinants that reshaped her previous representation of public and private spheres during her work as a volunteer for the Red Cross. Poland’s need and national emergency are the catalysts for this change: “Desde aquel momento mis actividades se dispusieron a ser útiles a la tierra en donde gran parte de mi vida se había desarrollado. Estudié un curso abreviado de enfermería.”

Sofía Casanova partook of this ample process through her volunteer work in the Red Cross; for her the war was a catalyst, propelling her idea on nurses’ labour within the frame of war towards the public sphere, an idea inspired by hygienist and Krausist theories. Without the war as a conditioning element it is very likely that as a mere nurse the writer would not have gone beyond Concepción Arevalo’s orthodox idea of influence (in essence: that the presence of public and private are merely necessary accessoires to “the political”, as are morality or family, but this presence in itself is not a political act) (Salas Iglesias, 2012). In war a sort of “family” was created with the soldiers and this led to the birth of ahome in wartime, an impenetrable and unchanging space.

And so the Great War favoured a context reinforced with political chance through the establishment of action standards in hospitals, trenches and fronts (including of course, the Home Front), all of them elements prone to enabling political empowerment. The common national effort, the social totalization of war processes, the ambiguous manner in which one partook in the conflict, all of it helped nurses and soldiers commonly identify through the equaling of activities and labours. An example of this was the order to hold ones ground in the face of the enemy’s advance and the impossibility to run unless ordered, applied to nurses and soldiers alike. Sofía Casanova, as was the case with many nurses in Russia, volunteers or not, was introduced into military discipline when the army absorbed medical organization (Gatrell, 1999: 127). One partook of the public sphere through the possibilities that arose from nursing activities. This factor meant the total involvement of nurses, through their daily routine and activities, as was the case with soldiers, in actions typical of wars. In the hospital, Sofía Casanova established a relationship with the wounded that was in a way similar to the ones she had nurtured in the salon. There too she took part in conversations where the necessary ideas of a political talk were summed up: “He oído en múltiples ocasiones el descontento de las tropas, y he sabido de su desconfianza hacia el generalato.”

Within this process of identification, material matters such as rank, medals and above all, uniforms, became symbolic means for empowerment. Sofía Casanova’s medals had a double image and possibility: they were a civil recognition, but born in the context of the army, through a sanitary emergency and a public catastrophe; as was the case in the army, uniform favoured distinction and hierarchy.

Furthermore, familiar and marital eventualities in a war context had an impact on shaping the representations of the public and private spheres. “El escritor no descansa nunca. Además, es mi medio de vida”, as Sofía Casanova put it in 1925, showcasing her material and social autonomy thanks to her work as a writer and journalist. The origin of this independence, other than the loss of her fortune during the war and the Bolshevik Revolution, lies in her failed marriage to Wicenty Lutosławski: “Pero antes ya tuve que dedicarme a la literatura. Cosas, disgustos.” The vagueness of this mention of things and unpleasantness seems to be connected with her unsuccessful marriage. This marital wreck led to Sofía Casanova’s literary and then economic renaissance. Likewise, she found the lit fuse which justified her changes at that time of need and crisis. Nevertheless, this situation, which differed substantially from the majority institutional norms which governed the gender system and, by extension, women’s reproductive empowerment, did not prevent Sofía Casanova’s discourse from still being based on sexual orthodoxy: “Fui, verdaderamente, una mujer a la española. Esto es, sumisa… Muy sumisa.” It rested also on her interest and obsession for the regulation and repetition of the norms: “La familia. La educación de mis hijas. He conseguido hacer de ellas unas admirables mujeres de hogar. Logré entregar a sus maridos intacto el depósito sagrado que Dios me confiara… Y son muy felices.” This discursive tension can be seen summarised in her description of her daily life, a constant pendulum between activity and reflection: “—¿Qué tipo de vida hace usted?— Muy intensa pero muy recogida.”

**SOFÍA CASANOVA: NATIONALISM, RELIGION AND CITIZENSHIP**

The development of the concept of citizenship by Sofía Casanova during the war and the practical use of the idea was articulated through the construction of National as a category for social organization, alongside Christianity and the absolute certainty in the need to maintain social order. Options for participating in the public sphere, and the subordination and hierarchical classification of activities within and without of the political, were established by Casanova according to those thee basic factors.

Gender marked (and marks) ones ability to partake in the Nation and by extension, ones political capacity, depending on sex. Especially during the second half of the 19th Century, pertaining to one nation or another established a hierarchy when faced with public exposition that Sofía Casanova strengthened during the War of 1914 (Hooper, 2008: 56-58). She, as an *ABC* journalist, created, as did others in the context, a ranking of subordination through concepts of nationality that would be set above gender when there was a difference in how one belonged to a Nation. From 1914 conditions arose for a different political opportunity, different to things that had come before, but still set in the same origins and criteria. The Nation, the Polish and the Spanish, would create a joining and crisis. Nevertheless, this situation, which differed substantially from the majority institutional norms which governed the gender system and, by extension, women’s reproductive empowerment, did not prevent Sofía Casanova’s discourse from still being based on sexual orthodoxy: “Fui, verdaderamente, una mujer a la española. Esto es, sumisa… Muy sumisa.” It rested also on her interest and obsession for the regulation and repetition of the norms: “La familia. La educación de mis hijas. He conseguido hacer de ellas unas admirables mujeres de hogar. Logré entregar a sus maridos intacto el depósito sagrado que Dios me confiara… Y son muy felices.” This discursive tension can be seen summarised in her description of her daily life, a constant pendulum between activity and reflection: “—¿Qué tipo de vida hace usted?— Muy intensa pero muy recogida.”

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The development of the concept of citizenship by Sofía Casanova during the war and the practical use of the idea was articulated through the construction of National as a category for social organization, alongside Christianity and the absolute certainty in the need to maintain social order. Options for participating in the public sphere, and the subordination and hierarchical classification of activities within and without of the political, were established by Casanova according to those thee basic factors.

Gender marked (and marks) ones ability to partake in the Nation and by extension, ones political capacity, depending on sex. Especially during the second half of the 19th Century, pertaining to one nation or another established a hierarchy when faced with public exposition that Sofía Casanova strengthened during the War of 1914 (Hooper, 2008: 56-58). She, as an *ABC* journalist, created, as did others in the context, a ranking of subordination through concepts of nationality that would be set above gender when there was a difference in how one belonged to a Nation. From 1914 conditions arose for a different political opportunity, different to things that had come before, but still set in the same origins and criteria. The Nation, the Polish and the Spanish, would create a joining effect that projected common destinies and objectives. This would be a major factor during the war: “Si, herma-
Concerning Spain, her original and constant reference, the nation acted as a perpetuating mechanism of the public/private dichotomy and reaffirmed the need to place Catholicism before any other category or hierarchy: “El las pueden organizar la cruzada de la Cruz Roja, que pide a Su Santidad y a las mujeres de todas las naciones una intervención rápida en favor de los pueblos víctimas de las luchas encarnizadas entre rusos, alemanes y ucranianos [...]”. This became a basic element for Sofía Casanova during the war, although it was clearly interiorized before it began. The novelty resides in her beckoning to women to take part, even if it was with old-fashioned charity. It is through the comparison of Spain and Russia that elements and mechanisms of reasoning arose through which Sofía Casanova became politically able and gained access to the public sphere, taking advantage of her Spanish nationality as an instrument to situate herself above others in certain situations, in spite of her sex and class.

However, her discourse was not linear or monolithic in regards to the national hierarchy and to Slavic subordinational to the West. In April 1925, in an interview by Enrique Estévez Ortega for La Esfera, Sofía Casanova said: “No sé… Cuando estoy en España suspiro por Polonia. Cuando estoy allí, siento la nostalgia de mi país.” According to the point of the kitchen and what happened within, appearing in propaganda as a possible key to victory (Storey, 2010: 33). Christianity strengthened the union between things wholly feminine, the home and the need for social order. Her determined religious convictions were the main articulator of her ideal social organization: nothing that existed should change because of the war or for it, and the basic instrument for solidarity would have to still be Rerum Novarum. Catholic inspired social action, structured as social maternity, does not vary through the war for Sofía Casanova, although it will establish itself firmly after 1918 due to the social and political pressure of Communism. The core idea being that social order, the regime that ruled the aspects of the private and the public, must not change:

Detrás de mí, en el patio, caían las balas, de suerte que no pudiendo retroceder a casa ni cruzar la calle, aguántate, con miedo, tras de dar unos pasos a la derecha y refugíarme en la embajada. Lo hice aprovechando un claro, subí, y en el despacho del Sr. Garrido encontré a su esposa, al señor embajador y al joven secretario Lacaslae.

In both her interpretations, Spanish and Polish, Catholic practices and ideals warned of the moral danger that the public sphere was toward perpetuating those very same things. To publicly expose religion, as was happening all through the war, could perhaps yield consequences contrary to Christian mandates. Morality becomes corrupted through excessive exposure to the public sphere, and truly the war had increased exposition, and its varying nature would have to be taken advantage of, so thought Casanova, to avoid contamination. It can therefore be argued that in this sense her religious veneration and her essentialist sexual nature reduced the political opportunities of a woman flawless in her devotion:

Los procesos de demencia individual poseen etiologías semejantes a los de la demencia popular. Un misterioso desequilibrio perturba las facultades psíquicas, desproporcionado la correlación de las ideas, favoreciendo y robusteciendo unas inclinaciones con perjuicio de otras. Cuando este desequilibrio tiene el imperativo de un rato genial, de un divino amor a los hombres, puede ascender una nación a la cumbre de su destino, o un sabio, un artista, un pensador marcará época con su acción y su obra.

It would therefore be her deep social conservative-ness, the profound belief in the need to upkeep unchanged
order to guarantee society’s existence, along with proper female reproduction, the factors that would determine the limits of Sofía Casanova’s political empowerment during World War I. The Galician writer would feel the Bolshevik Revolution as a terrible threat, and only in light of such a menace, and in the context of war, could she conceive the possibility of women soldiers that might defend the national cause, and along with it, the underlying social order. She would only be permissive in the context of the need to defend western values that she shared, but under no circumstance would she justify public involvement of armed revolutionary women; a process such as that was for her not a need for a society, rather a threat. In relation to this, and specially concerning matters contrary to her ideology, she reproduced the conditions that determined conservative feminists of the 19th Century: women might only participate actively in politics if they had first complied to their duty within the private sphere (Alzate, 2011: 172). To break such boundaries, and only as a chance, was only possible in the context of exceptional circumstances when it was necessary to defend social order: “¿Quién lo sabe! Sólo puede afirmarse que para la mujer sin hogar la independencia que da el trabajo es necesidad y contenido de su vida.”

It can be signalled out that the war of 1914 acted, in Sofía Casanova’s biography, as a catalyst of the value and relevance of things contextual and possible when political opportunities have to be established and taken advantage of. This clearly made a factor such as analyzing the personal stand out. When the claim to normality became louder, Sofía Casanova clarified the experience she had just lived, painful and traumatic, as an expression of triumphal feminism made possible by an excessive transformation of the limits between private and public. In essence crossing over of limits that had gone too far. That, after the war, the writer carried on with her journalist work and kept up her anti-Bolshevik militancy might be interpreted as a way of continuing her hopes of safekeeping and restoring Catholic morality, although up -front it was a manner of maintaining her autonomy in a family situation that demanded material contributions.

During the 1920’s as has been established by other studies, Sofía Casanova was even more present in Spain’s media and public life, a triumph that reinforced her profession and allowed her to gain economic independence (Martínez Martínez, 1999: 351-580). But in the space of this work I can only mention that I believe it is not possible to project beyond that precise point the direct implications that, through her representations of the public sphere, Sofía Casanova lived and experienced during World War I, because in the coming years new factors would take part and other historic contexts would arise that would continue to form her conception of “the political”, and in that context, her own role as a woman.

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NOTES

2. ABC, 6th April 1919: 8.
5. ABC, 8th April 1915: 7-8.
6. ABC, 11th May 1917: 3.
7. ABC, 13th December 1915: 3-5.
8. ABC, 29th May 1917: 3.
9. ABC, 16th August 1916: 3.
12. La Acción, 24th March 1919: 2.
13. ABC, 1st October 1918: 4-6.
14. For example, when her grandson died at Moscow in 1916: “Romano-Jose Pomy, el niño de mi hija, sangre de mi sangre, ha muerto [...] Cuarenta y ocho horas rodeamos su camita, espiando y ansiando contener los cambios desgarradores de la muerte. [...] Al comienzo de la guerra, que nos sorprendió en Drozadowo, lo saqué de allí, atravesando filas de soldados y cañones. [...] Romy llora de hambre; hay que calentar la leche de su alimento, pero no tenemos donde colocar la maquinilla de espíritus [...] y ese niño que entonces entregué salvo a su madre, enfermera en Varsovia, que soportó las agitaciones y las vicisitudes de estos dos años de guerra, víctima de ella, muere aquí. Es uno de los setenta por cien niños expatriados que caen en Moscú”.
16. ABC, 14th September 1918: 7.
17. ABC, 18th April 1918: 3.
18. ABC, 1st March 1918: 3.
19. ABC, 2nd March 1918: 3-5.
20. La Mañana, 6th April 1919: 8.
21. Sofía Casanova were still speaking about Concepción Arenal’s nursing idea: ABC, 29th January 1929: 3.
22. ABC, 13th June 1917: 3.
23. ABC, 15th May 1918: 11; and ABC, 28th Septemeber 1918: 10.
27. ABC, 13th November 1915: 3-6.
28. ABC, 14th February 1919: 3-4.
29. ABC, 17th July 1920: 3; and ABC, 18th August 1920: 3.
30. La Esfera, 4th April 1925: 16.
31. ABC, 19th July 1917: 3-4.
32. ABC, 16th February 1916: 3.
33. ABC, 9th December 1918: 3.
34. ABC, 27th June 1919: 3-4.
35. ABC, 8th May 1921: 4.

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