

## 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:** Empowerment; Journalism; Feminism; Catholicism; Bolshevik Revolution; Nationalism; Citizenship.

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**RESUMEN:** *Sofía Casanova y la Primera Guerra Mundial. Cambiando la esfera pública.*- Sofía Casanova fue una periodista española y voluntaria de la Cruz Roja durante la Primera Guerra Mundial. Sus crónicas fueron publicadas por el diario conservador ABC. Sofía Casanova estaba casada con el filósofo polaco Wicenty Lutoslawski desde 1887, vivía en Polonia, y es factible pensar en ella como una mujer de clase media “al uso”. Sin embargo, si se lleva a cabo una aproximación biográfica y ésta se centra en las representaciones de Casanova sobre las esferas de lo público y lo privado durante la Gran Guerra, algunas diferencias se presentan. Entre 1914 y 1918, hubo una modificación irregular en el sistema de género. El impacto de la guerra en la vida cotidiana consistió en una modificación asimétrica de las fronteras público-privado. Ese fenómeno histórico también dependía de unas categorías transversales al género como la clase, la religión y el nacionalismo. Sofía Casanova estuvo en la retaguardia del frente oriental: fue tanto testigo como protagonista de todos esos acontecimientos que cambiaron la esfera pública.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Capacitación política; Periodismo; Feminismo; Catolicismo; Revolución Bolchevique; Nacionalismo; Ciudadanía.

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### 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 Sofia 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 is 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 discriminately 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 Sofia 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 hierarchising 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 Sofia 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 compelling 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 Sofia Casanova in this sense. Neither, by extension, can we find a firm and fixated 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 Sofia 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 Sofia 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 representation<sup>1</sup>. In this sense, many contradictions can be identified between the discourse and the action of Sofia 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 arise through mediation with gender- influenced discourses. From that perspective, the analysis of changes in the representation of private and public that concerned me as theoretic frameworks have been more integrate and at the same time more specific. The principle core themes concerning practices and discourses in relation to public and private that guide my interpretation of Sofia Casanova, allow for questions concerning practices and discourses within the public sphere to be presented before the reader in a far more orderly manner (Rendall, 1999: 482).

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 Sofia 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 Sofia 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 Sofia Casanova in his interview for *La Mañana* in April 1919: “Cuando estrechamos la mano de Sofia Casanova, sentimos la emoción de hallarnos ante un héroe.”<sup>2</sup> Years later, Dr. Novoa Santos, while going over his latest medicine conferences, said of the Galician journalist:

Sofia Casanova, al término de mi conferencia anterior vino a decirme muy quedamente que ella, a pesar de ser la mujer como una forma neolérica quería persistir en ella. Pero Sofia Casanova, mujer aacida 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 neotérica 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 ofrecérsele, ya que el piropo al fin no es más que la expresión de una exaltación marcada de la feminidad.<sup>3</sup>

It is a definition which Sofia 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 Sofia 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 Sofia Casanova before the war.<sup>4</sup> 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, Sofia 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.”<sup>5</sup>

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 [...]”<sup>6</sup>

Sofia 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.<sup>7</sup>

However, the important thing in this case is to emphasise the use and meaning that Sofia 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.”<sup>8</sup> In them she would grant herself the condition of a complex woman, a woman writer rather than a journal-

ist, 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 Sofia 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.”<sup>9</sup>

To be able to understand this social phenomenon as an integral part of Sofia 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.”<sup>10</sup>

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 Sofia 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 acojo.”<sup>11</sup>

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: “Sofia Casanova, espectadora de la trágica contienda europea, ha sabido hacer sus preciosas crónicas de la guerra, consciente de su labor de periodista e informadora, con la mayor neutralidad y desapasionamiento.”<sup>12</sup> Duality and ambiguity, problems which stemmed from the majority discourse when trying to pigeonhole Sofia Casanova’s work as a journalist, since aesthetics and irrationality stood out as much as her professionalism, were also central 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 occurred within Sofia Casanova’s intimate and family space is minimal in her *ABC* work until the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution. It is the execution of her family —her brothers-in-law— that changes her point of view concerning 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 ancho corredor de las celdas herméticas. Al ventanillo enrejado asomanse los rostros de los reclusos, y desde una distancia de tres metros está permitido hablarles.”<sup>13</sup>

This way, the possibility of going beyond her own limits on representing public and private, where her activity was clearly in the field of “the political”, grew when Sofia Casanova came as close to the battlefields as possible; specially when the war touched so much on her private sphere, that she herself was involved in the conflict. Sofia Casanova 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 publication in the press.<sup>14</sup> 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, according 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 debating. All of this, in spite of her doubt-filled considerations or her frank stubbornness regarding subjectivity and the objective 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: “Escribo de tristezas, lector, en vez de entretenerse con femeninas amenidades de las moscovitas. Lo haré en seguida, continuando los esbozos que te presenté; pero hoy, la amenaza de que la guerra prosiga indefinidamente me sobrecoge y me desorienta.”<sup>15</sup>

Sofia Casanova also undertook what was expected of her as a female writer by the companies in charge of journalism: 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 femininity 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 masculinization. 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.”<sup>16</sup> Because of the way this apology is presented, it is hard to totally assure whether it was a rhetorical device, or perhaps 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: “Ansia 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.”<sup>17</sup>

Her interview of Leon Trotsky in the Smolny Institute of Saint Petersburg can be taken as the most significant example of surpassing the limits of public/private division in her activity as a journalist. Once again, the event is presented 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 company of another woman, her faithful servant Pepa, whose subordinate nature will introduce class elements when between both women a hierarchy of political capacity develops. Through an example such as this it becomes clear how Sofia Casanova had an active role in creating subordination relevant to public space access through the category of social class that in this situation will function as a transversal gender factor.<sup>18</sup> 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).<sup>19</sup>

The creation of a strong bond between the army’s soldiers 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; Rochaminov, 2006: 23-24). The way I see it, the perception of a common effort is based on the sensitive and familiar approach towards the soldiers from nurses and war Godmothers —where they existed— all of which spoke of an appropriation of the public space by widening the projection of labours tied to maternity.

In the aforementioned interview of April 1919, which was published in *La Mañana*, Sofia Casanova explained one of 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."<sup>20</sup>

Sofia 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 Concepcion Arenal's orthodox idea of influence (in essence: that the presence of public and private are merely necessary accessories 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 a home in wartime, an impenetrable and unchanging space.<sup>21</sup>

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 equalling of activities and labours. An example of this was the order to hold one's ground in the face of the enemy's advance and the impossibility to run unless ordered, applied to nurses and soldiers alike. Sofia 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, Sofia 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."<sup>22</sup>

Within this process of identification, material matters such as rank, medals and above all, uniforms, became symbolic means for empowerment. Sofia 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.<sup>23</sup>

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 Sofia 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 Lutoslawski: "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 Sofia 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 Sofia 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."<sup>24</sup>

## SOFÍA CASANOVA: NATIONALISM, RELIGION AND CITIZENSHIP

The development of the concept of citizenship by Sofia Casanova during the war and the practical use of the idea was articulated through the construction of Nationalism 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 three basic factors.

Gender marked (and marks) one's ability to partake in the Nation and by extension, one's 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 Sofia 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: "Sí, herma-

na —me respondió, saludando militarmente, con respecto— de la tragedia irremediable [de Polonia].”<sup>25</sup>

Cultural and political assimilation of the Polish nation into Sofia Casanova’s life appears as a distinguishing element in the historic evolution of this research’s protagonist. Polish nationalism’s cultural tradition granted more political abilities to women when compared to other 19<sup>th</sup> Century national cultures, and always from the perspective of reproducing the essence of Poland as a means and in the context of struggle (Lorence-Kot, 1985: 47). It had been national independence then, and between 1914 and 1918 it would be the World War One. A tradition such as that meant that women’s efforts would have to be directed towards complying with their sexual obligations, imposed by social and political power. It was precisely those attributes, well developed and understood, that would rightly give form to their nation, with the aforementioned objectives of liberation and independence in mind. It is this context that Sofia Casanova’s volunteer work must be understood, along with her active political discourse concerning Poland in the press.<sup>26</sup>

The needs of Poland during the Great War gave Sofia Casanova a political chance beyond the conditions imposed by Polish nationalism prior to 1914. The outstanding nature of the conflict made her reflect on the possibilities of her actions and discourses, in regard to Poland’s liberation as well. Consequently there was no such thing as an active option, simply a given task, without a possibility for change, due to her sex and nationality. What is more, Sofia Casanova believed that Poland was not a nation mature enough to organize herself democratically, in the manner of other European nations, such as France, England or even Spain. Such a circumstance allowed for women to actively partake in political institutions, as a contextual measure in the face of a national emergency. But this was also an example of Sofia Casanova’s tendency to organize nations hierarchically, based on Imperialist criteria of the time, placing herself as a Spaniard above Poles’ political capabilities.<sup>27</sup>

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: “Elas 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 [...]”.<sup>28</sup> This became a basic element for Sofia Casanova during the war, although it was clearly interiorized before it began. The novelty resides in her beckoning 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 Sofia 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.<sup>29</sup>

However, her discourse was not linear or monolithic in regards to the national hierarchy and to Slavic subordina-

tion to the West. In April 1925, in an interview by Enrique Estévez Ortega for *La Esfera*, Sofia Casanova said: “No sé... Cuando estoy en España suspiro por Polonia. Cuando estoy allí, siento la nostalgia de mi país.”<sup>30</sup> Accordingly, irrationality and nostalgia for a life spent between borders, trains, ships and roads provide a new aspect which removes any temptation to generalise and homogenise the life story of the journalist of the *ABC* newspaper and her concerns about country and citizenship.

“Mundane” and daily household chores associated to the feminine world acquired a new military meaning — and therefore an undeniable political capacity— 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 Sofia 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, aguarde, con miedo, tras de dar unos pasos a la derecha y refugiarme 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.<sup>31</sup>

In both her interpretations, Spanish and Polish, Catholic practices and ideals warned of the moral danger that the public sphere was towards perpetuating those very samethings.<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup>

It would therefore be her deep social conservatism, 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 Sofia 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.<sup>34</sup> 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 contento de su vida."<sup>35</sup>

It can be signalled out that the war of 1914 acted, in Sofia 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, Sofia 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 acrossing 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, Sofia 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, Sofia 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

- 1 *ABC*, 4<sup>th</sup> March 1918: 4.
- 2 *La Mañana*, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1919: 8.
- 3 *España Médica*, 15<sup>th</sup> December 1928: 16.
- 4 *ABC*, 15<sup>th</sup> November 1914: 7.
- 5 *ABC*, 8<sup>th</sup> April 1915: 7-8.
- 6 *ABC*, 11<sup>th</sup> May 1917: 3.
- 7 *ABC*, 13<sup>th</sup> December 1915: 3-5.
- 8 *ABC*, 29<sup>th</sup> May 1917: 3.
- 9 *ABC*, 16<sup>th</sup> August 1916: 3.
- 10 *ABC*, 26<sup>th</sup> April 1916: 4.
- 11 *ABC*, 4<sup>th</sup> February 1916: 7.
- 12 *La Acción*, 24<sup>th</sup> March 1919: 2.
- 13 *ABC*, 1<sup>st</sup> October 1918: 4-6.
- 14 For example, when her grandson died at Moscow in 1916: "Roman-José, Pomy, el niño de mi hija, sangre de mi sangre, ha muerto [...] Cuarenta y ocho horas rodeamos su camita, espian-do y ansiando contener los cambios desgarradores de la muerte. [...] Al comienzo de la guerra, que nos sorprendió en Drozdowo, 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, enfer-mera en Varsovia, que soportó las agitaciones y las vicisitudes de estos dos años de guerra, victima de ella, muere aquí. Es uno de los setenta por cien niños expatriados que caen en Moscú". *ABC*, 20<sup>th</sup> November 1916: 6-7.
- 15 *ABC*, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 1916: 7.
- 16 *ABC*, 14<sup>th</sup> September 1918: 7.
- 17 *ABC*, 18<sup>th</sup> April 1918: 3.
- 18 *ABC*, 1<sup>st</sup> March 1918: 3.
- 19 *ABC*, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 1918: 3-5.
- 20 *La Mañana*, 6<sup>th</sup> April 1919: 8.
- 21 Sofia Casanova were still speaking about Concepción Arenal's nursing idea: *ABC*, 29<sup>th</sup> January 1929: 3.
- 22 *ABC*, 13<sup>th</sup> June 1917: 3.
- 23 *ABC*, 15<sup>th</sup> May 1918: 11; and *ABC*, 28<sup>th</sup> Septemeber 1918: 10.
- 24 *La Esfera*, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1925: 16-17.
- 25 *ABC*, 24<sup>th</sup> May 1915: 4.
- 26 *ABC*, 8<sup>th</sup> April 1915: 7.
- 27 *ABC*, 13<sup>th</sup> November 1915: 3-6.
- 28 *ABC*, 14<sup>th</sup> February 1919: 3-4.
- 29 *ABC*, 17<sup>th</sup> July 1920: 3; and *ABC*, 18<sup>th</sup> August 1920: 3.
- 30 *La Esfera*, 4<sup>th</sup> April 1925: 16.
- 31 *ABC*, 19<sup>th</sup> July 1917: 3-4.
- 32 *ABC*, 16<sup>th</sup> February 1916: 3.
- 33 *ABC*, 9<sup>th</sup> December 1918: 3.
- 34 *ABC*, 27<sup>th</sup> June 1919: 3-4.
- 35 *ABC*, 8<sup>th</sup> May 1921: 4.

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