

## CHAPTER I

### “*Like Atlantis Swallowed Up by the Sea*”

#### The Vanishing of Spain’s Early Twentieth-Century Women Writers

¿Qué sabe y conoce Europa de nuestras mujeres? . . . ¿A qué confines de la intelectualidad extranjera han llegado las creaciones de nuestras artistas o los estudios de nuestras sabias? . . . Me duele confesarlo, pero no vale callar: la mujer española *está borrada* de la *cosmogonía intelectual* de Europa, cual Atlántida que devoró el mar, flotador epitafio de solo dos nombres: Isabel la Católica y Teresa de Jesús. (Casanova 1910, *La mujer española en el extranjero*, 5, emphasis Casanova’s)<sup>1</sup>

[What does Europe know of our women? . . . What horizons of foreign intellectual life have the creations of our female artists or the studies of our female scholars reached? . . . It pains me to confess it, but there is no sense in remaining silent: Spanish women *are erased* from the *intellectual cosmogony* of Europe, like Atlantis swallowed up by the sea, their floating epitaph just two names: Isabella the Catholic Queen and St. Teresa of Ávila.]<sup>2</sup>

[En Polonia], pues, no fue conocida por Sofía Casanova, ni por mujer de letras. . . . Únicamente era la señora de Lutostłowski. . . . Esto duró dieciséis años, en el decurso de los que no cogió la pluma sino para escribir cartas, considerando—por aquel entonces—que todas las glorias que la proporcionara la fama conquistada en España, por su labor intelectual, no pesaban, en definitiva, en la balanza de su existencia nueva, lo que significaba el cumplimiento de los deberes del hogar. (Pitollet 1958, 135)

[(In Poland), then, she was not known as Sofía Casanova or as a woman of letters. . . . She was simply Mrs. Lutosławski. . . . This went on for sixteen years, during which she picked up her pen only to write letters, believing—at the time—that all the glory of the fame she had earned in Spain, for her intellectual work, could not compete, in the end, with her new life, which meant carrying out her domestic duties.]

On the evening of Saturday, April 9, 1910, the Galician-Spanish expatriate poet, novelist, and journalist Sofía Casanova lectured to a packed auditorium at the Ateneo de Madrid. Her subject, which twenty years of living and traveling throughout Europe made her uniquely qualified to address, was *la mujer española en el extranjero* [the Spanish woman abroad], and her talk was illustrated with evidence from interviews that she had conducted with such European politicians, intellectuals, and celebrities as Sir Henry Morton Stanley, Marie Curie, and Leo Tolstoy.<sup>3</sup>

For those who read the lecture today, it is immediately apparent that, despite the title, the image of Spain and its women viewed from overseas is only part of Casanova's theme. By deliberately playing on her public profile as one of Spain's best-known and best-connected expatriates, with access to the salons of the most famous names in Europe, she mitigates the fact that much of the hour-long lecture is, in fact, a passionate defense of Spanish women's contribution to the emerging modern nation. Her dramatic conclusion is that it is not foreign intellectuals but men—Spanish men—who are responsible for downplaying the participation of Spanish women in Spain's past and present. In consequence, she argues, it is the duty of Spanish men to ensure that this contribution is not lost in the future:

Es de vosotros, señores, de quienes depende la suerte nuestra. Es de vosotros, los hacedores en público de leyes que deshacéis en privado, a quienes toca encauzar el espléndido manantial de la actividad femenina, que hoy se pierde . . . en las murmuraciones de la holganza, o la devoción sin caridad de los conventos. (Casanova 1910, *La mujer española en el extranjero*, 35)

[It is you, gentlemen, on whom our fortune depends. It is you, the makers in public of laws that you unmake in private, who must undam the splendid torrent of feminine activity, which today is disappearing . . . into idle gossip, or the devotion without charity of the convent.]

This radical demand is framed by a celebration of the myriad Spanish women who have contributed in various ways to Spain's history, as Casanova outlines

a glorious female intellectual tradition that stretches from the Renaissance into the future—in which, she argues, she and her contemporaries must be allowed to play their part.

The lecture received a rapturous reception, albeit not, perhaps, for the reasons Casanova might have hoped. Although the thrust of Casanova's lecture was strikingly different from the xenophobic, jingoistic view of Spanish culture and history promoted by her better-known male contemporaries, contemporary reviewers used it as proof of the persisting influence of the *leyenda negra* [black legend] of backward Inquisitorial Spain throughout Europe.<sup>4</sup> On the whole, the commentators neither responded to Casanova's debate on an intellectual level nor acknowledged that her criticism was directed much closer to home. Their silence was an omen. In January 1958, forty-eight years after that triumphant night at the Ateneo, the news of Casanova's death in the Polish city of Poznań at the age of ninety-seven reached her friends and relations at home. Almost instantly, the fears she had expressed in *La mujer española en el extranjero* were vividly realized with respect to her own place in Spanish history.

Back in 1910, in that auditorium in Madrid, Casanova had argued that Spanish women were erased from European intellectual history, "like Atlantis swallowed up by the sea." This dramatic image, meant to inspire change, proved to be an uncannily accurate prediction of Casanova's own fate. The tide began to encroach immediately after her death, when a flurry of obituaries, principally by Galician writers and journalists, appeared in Spain's local, regional, and national press. For many years, these brief and often impressionistic evocations of a long and productive life were the only source of information available to scholars who sought to learn more about Casanova's life and work. It is largely thanks to these obituaries that, despite Casanova's formidable and heterogeneous oeuvre, she is no longer remembered as a writer and intellectual but as an exotic figure on the fringes of Spanish culture and—even worse—an idealized symbol of nationalist womanhood. In just one of several such write-ups that he produced for the Spanish and Galician press, Casanova's family friend José Luis Bugallal y Marchesi, the self-appointed guardian of her reputation, describes her as "la santa que murió de saudade" (1958a, 18) [the saint who died of homesickness]. In a subsequent article, he wrote of her love for both "España, para quien Sofía Casanova—méritos literarios aparte—era una mártir, y Galicia, que la veneraba como a reliquia" (1958b, 139) [Spain, for whom Sofía Casanova—literary merits apart—was a martyr, and Galicia, which venerated her as a holy relic]. Six months earlier, the Galician author and scholar Victoriano García Martí had claimed that her life was "llena de luchas en países extranjeros, pero siempre [conservaba] las

raíces raciales de su patria y de su tierra” (1957, 12) [full of struggles in foreign lands, yet she always (retained) the racial roots of her homeland and her native soil].

More striking than any of the Galician obituaries, however, is the obituary written by Camille Pitollet, a French Hispanist close to the Franco regime (see the second quotation at the head of this chapter), which claims that during the first sixteen years of her marriage (which took place in 1887), Casanova abandoned her budding literary career and stayed at home to devote herself to husband and children. This outrageous misrepresentation is typical of the strategies employed by Francoist sympathizers to neutralize the impact of successful women—and Casanova was, without a doubt, a successful woman. Far from retreating into domestic bliss in the decade after her marriage, she had, in fact, expanded her professional horizons: She had collaborated assiduously in the Galician, Spanish, and Polish press, had published several critically acclaimed books, and had traveled widely throughout Europe meeting with intellectuals from a variety of countries—all of which she describes in the four essays contained in the travelogue *Sobre el Volga helado* [Across the Frozen Volga], first published in 1899. This effort was, however, to no avail. By the end of the 1950s, Casanova—a woman who had traveled throughout Europe; who had moved in the highest political circles; who had witnessed the Russian Revolution, the rise of Franco, and the Nazi invasion of Poland; who had been a writer of internationally popular fiction; and who had served for twenty years as the Eastern European correspondent for one of Spain’s most prestigious daily newspapers—was all but forgotten. Thanks to the obituaries that rebranded her as a saint, a martyr, and a holy relic, she was remembered in the second half of the twentieth century—where she was remembered at all—not as a pioneering, cosmopolitan intellectual and an accomplished professional writer but as a passive, sentimentalized icon of Francoist femininity.

### Back to Basics: A Brief Biography of Sofía Casanova

The disappearance of anything but a patchy and sanitized account of Casanova’s own life and work from the official record vindicates the fears she so lucidly expressed at the Ateneo in 1910. Casanova’s invocation of a forgotten history to legitimize her claims in the present is a strategy shared by more recent feminist historians for whom, as Joan Scott has written, “if women’s subordination—past and present—was secured at least in part by their invisibility, then emancipation might be advanced by making them visible in narratives of social struggle and political achievement” (1997, 2). As Scott goes on to ar-

gue, however, the metaphor of visibility is problematic, as it can imply that "the feminist historian's task [is] simply the recovery of previously ignored facts" (3). Nevertheless, the recovery of facts is an essential starting point for the study of not only women but all marginalized groups and cultures. As Casanova herself recognized, it is only once the visibility of forgotten writers is restored through the recovery of names, dates, places, and texts that "the questions of why these facts had been ignored and how they were now to be understood [can be] raised" (Scott 1997, 3). In this spirit, then, it seems appropriate to begin with a brief outline of Casanova's life and work.<sup>5</sup>

Sofía Guadalupe Pérez de Eguía Casanova was born in A Coruña in Spanish Galicia in 1861. After her father disappeared while *en route* to Cuba when she was very young, Sofía and her two younger brothers were raised by their mother and maternal grandparents, in whose honor she took the name Casanova.<sup>6</sup> Casanova began publishing poetry in Galician newspapers and journals as an adolescent, and when the family moved to Madrid in the early 1870s, she became part of the circle of poets that included Ramón de Campoamor, José de Echegaray, and Gaspar Núñez de Arce. By the time she married the Polish philosopher Wincenty Lutosławski in 1887, Casanova was widely celebrated in Spain as one of the most exciting young poets of either gender. In his introduction to her first collection of verse, *Poesías*, Ricardo Blanco Asenjo noted that "a Sofía no se la debe considerar poetisa" (1885, xv) [Sofía should not be considered simply a poetess]. Upon her marriage, however, she left Spain for Eastern Europe, accompanying her husband during his various temporary academic positions and research visits to Warsaw, Dorpat (now Tallinn, Estonia), London, Kazan (Russia), and Moscow. Throughout this period, during which she gave birth to three daughters, Casanova not only continued to write poems, many of which were collected in *Fugaces* (1898), but also began to experiment with prose. Her first novel, *El doctor Wolski*, set among the Polish community of Kazan, was published in 1894. In the introduction to the novel, Casanova notes that she wrote it at the request of friends in Spain who were interested in learning about "los hábitos y costumbres de dos curiosos pueblos del Norte" (n.p.) [the habits and customs of two curious peoples of the North]. Following the death of their third daughter, Jadwiga, in 1895, the Lutosławskis returned to Casanova's native Galicia, where she gave birth to her fourth and last child, Halina. Casanova continued to write short stories and articles about life in Poland and Russia, some of which were published in Spanish and Galician periodicals, such as *Revista Gallega*, *Galicia Moderna*, *España Artística*, and *Revista Contemporánea*, and one of which—a sketch of life in a Galician village—was published in the Polish journal *Słowo*. In 1899 four articles entitled "Cien leguas sobre el Volga

helado” [One Hundred Leagues across the Frozen Volga], which chronicled Casanova’s 1893 journey from Drozdowo (her husband’s family estate near Warsaw) to Kazan, appeared in Madrid’s *Revista Contemporánea*. The articles were so popular that in 1903 and again in 1919 they were reissued in book form as *Sobre el Volga helado*.

When the Lutosławskis returned to Poland in 1899, they moved to the southern city of Kraków. The city—which was part of Austrian Poland and therefore subject to fewer restrictions on Polish language and culture than the partitions occupied by Russia and Prussia—had a thriving and dynamic literary community, in which Casanova was enthusiastically involved. In 1907, however, having separated from Lutosławski, Casanova returned to Madrid, taking an apartment close to the one shared by her mother and her brother Vicente. Until her return to Poland in 1914 (at the first sign of the outbreak of war), she collaborated with many newspapers and periodicals of differing political and cultural hues. Among these were not only the relatively traditional *El Liberal* but also *La Nueva Era*, *Galicia* (Buenos Aires), *El Imparcial*, *La Tribuna*, and on one occasion even *Prometeo*, which César Antonio Molina considers the most important precursor of the *vanguardista* journals of the 1920s (1990, 44). She also published four novels: *Lo eterno* [The Eternal] (1907), *Más que amor* [More Than Love] (1908), *Princesa del amor hermoso* [Princess of Beautiful Love] (1909), and *El crimen de Beira-mar* [The Crime of Beira-mar] (1914); a collection of short stories (some of which had originally been published as early as the 1890s) called *El pecado* [The Sin] (1911); and a play, *La madeja* [The Bobbin] (1913), which was produced by Benito Pérez Galdós.<sup>7</sup> In 1913, she published a collection of many of her articles from this Madrid interlude, under the title *Exóticas* [Exotic Tales], before she returned to Warsaw at the outbreak of World War I. Casanova would never thereafter live permanently in Spain.

Back in Poland, Casanova’s life changed immeasurably. The war meant that her communications with Spain were often interrupted for weeks at a time, while day-to-day life in Warsaw was overshadowed by the constant threat of invasion from Russia to the East and Germany to the West. In 1915 Casanova was offered a position as Eastern European correspondent for the Madrid daily newspaper *ABC*, a job she would hold until the newspaper’s (temporary) demise in 1936. Through the pages of *ABC*, Casanova chronicled events in Poland and Eastern Europe, interpreting them for her Spanish readers as she publicized Poland’s predicament and raised awareness and sympathy in a country whose neutral status fostered little interest in events on the other side of Europe. Casanova was one of a number of star columnists at *ABC*, which, since its foundation in 1903, had peddled “an audacious, reformist sort

of journalism" (Gómez Aparicio 1974, 177, my translation), investing in new technology and foreign correspondents and removing the conventional page limit in order to accommodate its contributors. The newspaper's sympathies were monarchist and patriotic, as were Casanova's; unusually, however, "en una época en que la gran mayoría de los periódicos tenían una concreta filiación partidista, [ABC] izó, en política, la bandera de la independencia, para servir al interés de España y al del público" (Gómez Aparicio 1974, 179) [in an era when the vast majority of newspapers had a particular party affiliation, (ABC) raised the flag of political independence, to serve the interests of Spain and the public]. In time, other newspapers would follow ABC's lead, but ABC retained its reputation as innovative and independent. Casanova's articles for ABC during World War I were posted from all over Poland, and after her family's evacuation during the invasion of Warsaw in 1915, they were posted from from Minsk, Moscow, and St. Petersburg. She remained in St. Petersburg for two years, experiencing the horrors of the Russian Revolution at first hand, and despite the virtually insurmountable practical difficulties that she faced, she never ceased to record her observations and impressions for her Spanish readers. Her wartime articles were collected and published in *De la guerra: Crónicas de Polonia y Rusia* [On War: Chronicles from Poland and Russia] (1916), *De la revolución rusa en 1917* [On the Russian Revolution in 1917] (1917), and *La revolución bolchevista (diario de un testigo)* [The Bolshevik Revolution (an Eyewitness Diary)] (1920).

In 1919 Casanova returned to Spain in poor health as a result of her wartime experiences and almost blind as a result of an accident with a cart on a St. Petersburg street. Received as a heroine in Madrid and Galicia, she traveled the country giving lectures and attending receptions; during this time she took the opportunity to observe Spain, especially her beloved Galicia, and to chronicle for ABC the changes she perceived since her departure in 1914. Throughout the 1920s Casanova continued to write regularly for ABC, living permanently in Warsaw but paying an extensive visit to Spain every two to three years. She covered the Russo-Polish war of 1919–1921 and the subsequent Lithuanian and Silesian plebiscites, the Polish transition to independence, and the economic and ministerial crises that lasted throughout the 1920s, all of which were set against the backdrop of her increasing concern over the rise of Bolshevik Russia. During her trips to Spain, she reported on the changes she perceived in Spanish life and the similarities to and differences from life in Eastern Europe and offered her recommendations for economic and cultural development.

During the 1920s she also published a number of short novels; a children's book, *Viajes y aventuras de una muñeca española en Rusia* [Travels and Adven-

tures of a Spanish Doll in Russia] (1920); a history of the decline of Tsarist Russia, *En la corte de los zares (del principio y del fin de un imperio)* [At the Court of the Tsars (of the Beginning and End of an Empire)] (1924); and a number of articles on cultural topics for *Blanco y Negro* (a weekly publication from the same stable as *ABC*) and for Galician periodicals such as *La Voz de Galicia* and *El Eco de Santiago*. Some of her articles from *ABC* and *Blanco y Negro* were collected in *De Rusia: Amores y confidencias* [From Russia: Romance and Secrets] (1927), the fourth and last volume of her *Obras completas* [Complete Works]. She continued to write for *ABC* on a regular basis until 1936 (two isolated articles appeared thereafter in 1939 and 1944), but her collaboration with other periodicals all but ceased after 1930. Casanova's last two original works of fiction were the novels *Como en la vida* [As in Life] (1931) and *Las catacumbas de Rusia roja* [The Catacombs of Red Russia] (1933); her last original publication was *Polvo de escombros* [Dust from the Rubble], a day-by-day account of the Nazi invasion of Warsaw in 1939, published in *El martirio de Polonia* without her knowledge or consent in 1945. After World War II she remained with her family behind the Iron Curtain, able to communicate with Spain only sporadically. In 1958 she died in Poznań, Poland.

## Contesting the Myth:

### Women Intellectuals at the *Fin de Siglo*

My chief concern in this book is the disparity between the evidence of active participation in *fin de siglo* social, cultural, and political debates by women such as Casanova and their absence from the historical record. It is scandalous that despite the great advances in Hispanic literary scholarship in general and feminist scholarship in particular, since the 1980s, the myth of the absence of women from *fin de siglo* culture remains largely uncontested. In fact, Casanova and her peers are so markedly missing from accounts of both the Galician *fin de século* and the Spanish *fin de siglo* that if we look at published sources, the history of women's writing in Galicia seems to jump forty years from Rosalía de Castro's *Follas Novas* in 1880 to Francisca Herrera Garrido's *Néveda* in 1920—and, even so, Herrera often merits little more than a footnote (Hooper 2003). With regard to Spain, Maryellen Bieder writes that “while a great many more women published fiction than those few whose names we remember today, no *one* author occupies a secure niche in the canon” (1992, 313–14), and she quotes Alda Blanco's “bold prediction” that “un estudio de esta generación de escritoras revelaría que existió en España, en las primeras décadas del siglo, un movimiento literario femenino equivalente al

que surgió en Estados Unidos y en Inglaterra" (Blanco 1989, 23 n. 22) [a study of this generation of women writers would reveal the existence in Spain, in the first decades of the century, of a female literary movement equivalent to the one emerging in the United States and in England]. A year later, Roberta Johnson observed that "the '98 Generation stands out as a desert for women writers of any kind, and the reasons for their disappearance from the Castilian literary scene for a period of some thirty years have yet to be sorted out" (1993, 12).

My intention in this volume is, in part, to "recover" Casanova and her works as a case study to demonstrate the participation of women writers in the forging of "modern" Spain. In so doing, I develop Bieder's then-radical proposition that "the recovery of such a vibrant literary movement would make untenable the exclusion of the twentieth-century woman writer from the current codification of Spanish letters" (1992, 314). At the same time, I offer a new perspective on what Denise Riley has called "the misleading familiarity of 'history'" (1988, 5), thus contributing to the current move to reconceive the way that we teach and research the transition to modernity in Spain.

From the official record, it appears that women writers disappeared from the Spanish and Galician literary scene at the beginning of the twentieth century. The nineteenth century is well covered—at least from the bibliographical point of view—by María del Carmen Simón Palmer's monumental *Escritoras españolas del s. XIX* (1991), and recent interest in Western modernism has brought a certain amount of recognition for women who began their careers in the 1920s and 1930s. Many of the women within my realm of interest, however—although they published too late or too little to be included by Simón Palmer—were already middle aged (or dead) by the 1920s and therefore of limited interest to students of literary modernism. Moreover, few of these women published the kinds of works, or in the kinds of venues, that have traditionally attracted scholarly attention. In this light, therefore, it is essential that, following Kathleen McNerney and Cristina Enríquez de Salamanca, we take into account the following:

A standard . . . based solely on the publication of books would [show] a complete lack of understanding of the problems these women faced when trying to publish their work. . . . It is impossible to determine if someone is a "writer" by counting the number of her works. Other criteria are involved in judging literary achievement—value judgments, social effects, literary influence, and so on—which means that this label eludes easy definition (1994, 11).

According to my own research, more than 250 women were active in Spanish cultural and intellectual circles in the two decades around the turn of the twentieth century, and at least 15 women were actively writing in Galician. Extending McNerney and Enríquez's recognition of "gray areas . . . within the genres" (6), I include in this figure not only imaginative writers but also the authors of religious and autobiographical texts, journalists, translators, and educators, all of whom contributed in various ways to the cultural life of *fin de siglo* Spain. These women did not exist in a vacuum, either from society or from one another. There is evidence, if we know where to look, that although, as Bieder (1995) has shown, some women—Emilia Pardo Bazán for example—consciously held themselves apart from the idea of a "women's literature," others "view[ed] themselves as part of a community and a continuum" (Walker 1995, 21). For example, both Casanova's 1910 Ateneo lecture and Carmen de Burgos's 1906 address to the Press Association of Rome, *La mujer en España* [Women in Spain], argue strongly that there existed in turn-of-the-century Spain a dynamic and wide-ranging female artistic community. As shown by both Burgos's and Casanova's inclusion of writers who were already dead by the 1900s, the present-day community was founded on an equally vibrant heritage. In *La mujer en España*, Burgos states that "la facultad artística abunda en las mujeres de España" (1906, 34) [artistic ability is abundant in Spain's women] and goes on to name not only writers but also singers, such as María García (known by her stage name, María Malibrán [circa 1809–1836]) and Adelina Patti (1848–1919); actors, such as Matilde Díez (1818–1883), Teodora Lamadrid (fl. 1860–1875), María [Álvarez] Tubau [de Palencia] (1854–1914), and María Guerrero (1867–1928); painters, such as Rafaela Sánchez Aroca, Clara Salazar, and María Luisa [de] la Riva [y Callol de] Muñoz (1859–1926); and a writer and composer, María del Pilar Contreras de Rodríguez (1861–1930). Among the writers that she names are Carmen Blanco y Trigueros (fl. 1878–1918), Sofía Casanova, "the illustrious old lady" Carolina Coronado (1823–1911), Rosa Eguílaz [y Renart de Parada] (born 1864), Magdalena [de Santiago] Fuentes (1873–1922), Concepción Gimeno [de Flaquer] (1850–1919), Emilia Pardo Bazán (1851–1921), and Blanca de los Ríos [y Nostench de Lámperez] (1862–1956) (34–37). Casanova agrees with Burgos about Gimeno, Pardo Bazán, and De los Ríos and adds Concepción Arenal (1820–1893) and Patrocinio de Biedma [y la Moneda] (1858–1927) to the group that she describes as "sangre y verbo de la literatura española" (Casanova 1910, *La mujer española en el extranjero*, 35) [blood and word of Spanish literature]. She makes separate mention of those who are active in poetry, drama, and journalism, including Rosario de Acuña (1851–1923), Consuelo Álvarez [Poll] (known as Violeta [fl. 1900–1930]), Carmen de Burgos, Rosalía de Castro

(1837–1885), Filomeno Dato Muruais (1856–1926), Gloria de la Prada [Navarro] (known as Mimi [1886–1951]), Salomé Núñez y Topete (fl. 1878–1926), and Melchora [Herrero y Ayora de] Vidal (fl. 1890–1927) (35).<sup>8</sup> These women, she notes,

tendrán continuadoras; y así como hoy sus nombres van, fronteras adelante, a posarse cual rayo de luz precursor de plenitud meridiana en los escasos elegidos de la intelectualidad extranjera, así irán los de otras doctoras que . . . perseveren en la dura labor de hacer por España lo que más necesita. (36)

[will have followers; and just as today their names travel across frontiers to pause, like a sunbeam announcing the brilliance of noon, on the chosen few foreign intellectuals, so will those of other learned women who . . . persevere in the struggle to do for Spain what it needs the most].

Despite Casanova’s optimistic prediction, the vast majority of these women do not feature in modern accounts, and little is known about them. Even those such as Carmen de Burgos and Concha Espina, whose lives and works are reasonably well documented, have received only limited critical attention. The absence of all but a handful of these women from the official record of Spanish and Galician literature shows that the national model of literary history that we have known since the nineteenth century does not adequately represent the full range of cultural expression. This is important, because women’s perceived silence during this crucial period in the formation of modern Iberian identities continues to have significant repercussions, not least in the remarkable and regrettable lack of female novelists in Galicia today (Hooper 2003).

What, then, are the answers to these seemingly intractable issues? Is it enough simply to try to reconstruct the fragmented history of women’s writing in Galicia, filling in the gaps between Rosalía de Castro and Francisca Herrera or between Francisca Herrera and María Xosé Queizán forty-five years later and inserting the result into the master narrative? Should we, as the Spanish critic Ámparo Hurtado does, look for a female Generation of 1898? That is, to extend the famous metaphor of Audre Lorde (1983), should we use the master’s tools (in this case, the categories, periods, labels of literary history) to dismantle the master’s house, or should we go out and find our own tools and build our own house? Unquestionably, this discussion has implications far beyond the limited fields I have taken as my object in this study; indeed, the debate over whether the master’s tools can ever, in fact, dismantle the master’s house is relevant to all of us who study marginal identities and

cultures. In the case of turn-of-the-century Iberian women's writing, the question of women's absence from the official histories is compounded by the lack of information about their lives and the lack of access to their works, many of which have never been reprinted and are confined to one or two academic libraries. In consequence, as Lou Charnon-Deutsch has observed, a great deal of groundwork remains to be laid, since "the process of reassessing a feminine tradition begins with a search, discovery, reediting and reevaluation of what has been excluded from the predominantly male canon" (2003, 122). Although this work is essential, the implications of simply transferring the strategies and apparatus of the hegemonic culture (the "master's tools") to these newly discovered texts are serious. To this end, I argue for a two-pronged approach to the study of such works, always bearing in mind, as feminist scholars have been arguing for decades, that "the writing of women into history necessarily involves redefining and enlarging traditional notions of historical significance" (Gordon et al. 1976, 89). That is, with the ammunition provided by comprehensive and, even more important, accurate bio-bibliographical and textual details, we can begin to reevaluate the grand narratives of history and literature themselves and then, as Bieder has argued, "not really redesign—regender—the literary canon, but explode it" (1992, 321).

### Gender and the Modern Nation: Writing Women at the *Fin de Siglo*

The project proposed by Bieder (and many others) is based on the conviction that the canon is not natural and essential but has been constructed and legitimized by and for a particular group. In this light, its terms and categories become objects (rather than instruments) of analysis, allowing us to consider the canon's multiple absences and exclusions as resulting from particular discursive strategies. If we analyze the discursive strategies at play in *fin de siglo* Spain, we can begin to explain how and why the exclusion of women such as Casanova and her contemporaries occurred. Susan Kirkpatrick (1995) argues—with reference to novels such as Leopoldo Alas's *Su único hijo* (1891) and Benito Pérez Galdós's *Tristana* (1892)—that the *fin de siglo* was pervaded by a sense of crisis based on the fear of a link between the erosion of gender distinction and the breakdown of fundamental systems of social organization and meaning. In order to contain the problem, "feminized" culture had to be stripped of its authority and reconfigured in negative terms. Thus, "denigrating images of femininity—as perverse, pathological, weak-minded and dangerous—become the operative elements in much of the . . . *fin de siglo* rhetoric

deploying the tropes of gender" (Kirkpatrick 1995, 97). As Kirkpatrick has observed, it is ironic that the binary division between the canonical literary groups known as the Generation of 1898 and *modernistas*, although it served to eliminate women's contributions to *fin de siglo* culture, was itself founded on a gendered distinction between the "virile" Generation of 1898 and the "effeminate" *modernistas* (2003, 10). The rhetorical structures of gender and nation increasingly coincided, so that to be masculine was to be *castizo* [genuinely Spanish], patriotic, and realist (like the Generation of 1898), whereas to be feminine was to be degenerate, idealistic, and worst of all (like the *modernistas*) tainted by foreignness.

Plenty of evidence of this kind of imagery exists in *fin de siglo* writings, demonstrating that the very existence of women writers was a source of great disquiet to their male contemporaries. Thinkers such as Miguel de Unamuno (see his article "A una aspirante a escritora" [To an Aspiring Lady Writer], first published in 1907) sought to reinforce the boundaries between the masculine and feminine, or the public and private spheres that the woman writer was viewed as breaching. Responding to an inquiry from a fictional young lady who wants advice on becoming a writer, Unamuno is distinctly discouraging:

Me parece difícilísima y muy delicada la posición de una mujer que entre nosotros quiere dedicarse a la carrera de las letras. Me parece difícilísima su posición en todo país y en todo tiempo, pero mucho más en nuestro país, y tal vez en nuestro tiempo. (1959–1964, 479)

[The position of a lady who wants to devote herself to a literary career in this country seems to me really quite difficult and very delicate. Her position in any country and at any time seems to me really quite difficult, but far more so in our country and, perhaps, in our time.]

This is the case, he says, because literary language belongs to men—"es un producto de una civilización predominantemente masculina" (479) [it is the product of a predominantly masculine civilization]—and therefore "el escribir una mujer para el público en lengua literaria masculina es algo así como ponerse los pantalones" (480) [for a woman to write for the public in masculine literary language is rather like her putting on a pair of trousers]. That is, it is a huge and almost unthinkable social transgression and one that would certainly compromise the respectability of any woman who dared to try it.

One solution to the "problem" of the woman writer encroaching on the public sphere was simply to ignore her seemingly inappropriate interventions

in favor of more appropriate actions. This occurs increasingly throughout Casanova's career, and overwhelmingly after the Spanish Civil War, as her (exclusively male) biographers and reviewers focus on her exotic life, her personality, and her social work rather than on her literary and intellectual production. In a review of her third and final collection of poetry, *El cancionero de la dicha* (1911), Eduardo Gómez de Baquero describes Casanova's work as predominantly feminine, contrasting her favorably with "las mujeres que cultivan una literatura desgarrada, de tonos crudos y violentos" [women who cultivate a scandalous literature, with crude and violent overtones], whom he sees as "fuera de su papel, como un cura anticlericalista o un soldado antimilitarista" (1911, 3) [out of place, like an anticlerical priest or an antimilitarist soldier]. In his introduction to *La revolución bolchevista* (first published in 1920), "RC" (José Ruíz Castillo Basala) sees two sides to Casanova's character, which reflect the dichotomized feminine ideal of the time—she is "heroica, fuerte, española" [heroic, strong, Spanish] but at the same time "sensible, delicada, mujer y poeta" (1989, 83) [sensitive, delicate, woman and poet]. The editorial blurb on the cover of the 1947 edition of *Como en la vida*, the last of her works to be published during her lifetime, abandons any hint of this dichotomy. It focuses instead on her social work—"ha puesto siempre su pluma al servicio de causas humanitarias" [she has always placed her pen at the service of humanitarian causes]—and the alleged expression of her gentle, womanly character through her writing: "De cuanto escribe emana una tierna delicadeza femenina." [A tender feminine delicacy emanates from whatever she writes.]

Whereas some attempted to neutralize rebellious women writers by rewriting their lives to fit dominant notions of femininity and Spanishness, others took a different approach—they turned them into objects of ridicule. In his memoirs, Rafael Cansinos-Asséns—a Jewish acquaintance with whom Casanova had a heated correspondence when he accused her of anti-Semitism—recalled his first meeting with her at one of Carmen de Burgos's literary salons, probably some time between 1909 and 1913. In Cansinos-Asséns's account Casanova comes across as a foolish, excitable woman with a ridiculous tendency toward patriotic babble: "Yo estoy por España y por los españoles . . . , ¡oh españoles de mi alma! . . . [y] también por el polvo y las moscas . . . , ¡moscas españolas!" (1982, 214). [I'm all for Spain and for the Spanish . . . oh, my dear darling Spaniards! . . . and for the dust and the flies too . . . Spanish flies!] He links what he sees as her overdeveloped sense of patriotism with the Catholic fanaticism of the Inquisition and reports a comment allegedly made by someone else who was present: "Es como el marqués de Bradomín; fea, católica y sentimental" (215). [She's like the (fictional) Marqués of Bradomín; ugly, Catholic, and sentimental.]

The novelist Juan Valera's description of Casanova's attendance at one of his *tertulias* in 1901 is equally unflattering. Valera remembers what occurred when he and the others present asked Casanova to recite some of her verses:

Ella los recitó con mucho manoteo, haciendo mil muecas y con una musiquilla tan rara y tan lúgubre que fue milagro que no soltasen el trapo a reír todos cuantos componían el auditorio. (1956, 272)

[She recited them with much hand waving, making a thousand faces and in such a strange and lugubrious singsong voice that it was a miracle that everyone in the audience didn't burst out laughing.]

Valera acknowledges Casanova's literary activity, however, describing her as "una gran literata, gallega como Doña Emilia" [a great lady novelist, Galician like Doña Emilia (Pardo Bazán)] and "un pasmoso fenómeno, digno de contemplación y estudio" (272) [a fearsome phenomenon, worthy of contemplation and study]. One cannot help but wonder—and it is impossible to know—whether he is being entirely serious and whether (in the light of his anecdote) it is her character rather than her work that he deems worthy of study. His use of the term *literata* is certainly unsympathetic. For male writers, as Bieder has argued, "a *poetisa* or *literata* is always an inferior imitation of an unattainable male model" (1995, 101).

In contrast to Valera, Cansinos-Asséns is explicitly dismissive of Casanova's work, describing her as "la autora de unas novelitas de las que sólo conozco los títulos" (1982, 212) [the lady author of some silly novels of which I know nothing more than the titles]. He makes no mention of her poetry or her journalism but goes into great detail about her life and particularly her marriage: "Constituye una novela" (212). [It constitutes a novel in itself.] Valera too is intrigued by Casanova's husband, referring to him as "un sabio polaco que de puro sabio se ha vuelto loco" (1956, 272) [a Polish scholar who has gone mad from pure scholarship] and commenting that his name is so difficult that he dare not try to write it down. Clearly, even relatively early in her career, the exoticism of Casanova's circumstances was becoming more attractive to casual observers than the quality of her works, but this is by no means the only reason for Valera's and Cansinos-Asséns's focus on her personality. Joyce Tolliver observes a similar phenomenon in accounts of Casanova's compatriot and contemporary Pardo Bazán: "Many of her detractors," Tolliver writes, "attend far more to her person than they do to her work; and the annoyance expressed in many of the criticisms of her comportment is due to little more than the perception that [she] does not 'know her place'" (1998, 21).

The difficulty for those of us who study minority writers—among whom, in this case, we must include *fin de siglo* women—is that the place that was allocated to them and that for many years they were expected to accept without question inevitably sets them outside existing models of cultural and literary history. This is partly because, as we have seen, these models are predicated on exclusivity and on boundaries drawn around the national literature. The difficulty of challenging these boundaries is intensified because the criteria for inclusion and exclusion are often distinctly unclear and based on vague notions of “quality.” The continued influence of such criteria is evident in the question that all of us who study minority writers have faced at some point: But are they any good? (Blanco 1993). The danger of this question, of course, is that it assumes a consensus about what, precisely, is meant by “good”—a consensus that, since the canon wars and the institutionalization of formerly marginalized writings, has become increasingly less possible or, indeed, desirable. Furthermore, it highlights the continued need to relativize the notion of “quality” and deconstruct its supporting rhetoric.

In the case of *fin de siglo* women, as we have seen, such investigation shows that decisions about their inclusion or exclusion were based on social and biographical rather than textual and intellectual factors. The effects of these decisions have been intensified by the peculiar development of Spanish literary studies during the twentieth century. Although it is now a critical commonplace to question the divide between the Generation of 1898 and the *modernistas*<sup>9</sup> and although more and more scholars are beginning to question the continued critical focus on writers traditionally associated with those groups, rather fewer are prepared to challenge the main stumbling block: the dominance of the generational system itself. The reluctance of many Hispanists to move away from what has been, after all, a defining factor in Spanish literary studies reflects the tension between the centripetal pull of the national literature and the increasingly centrifugal dynamic of interdisciplinary cultural studies, in which Hispanism has until recently played a relatively limited part. This reluctance—as Mary Lee Bretz has convincingly argued—“reveals a discomfort with plurality and an insistent homogenization of the cultural and intellectual currents of a given moment” (2001, 68). Although I agree with Michael Ugarte that “the very formation of any literary tradition or history assumes the presence of a historical continuum, a dialogue between and among specific historical moments . . . and the term generation can be a useful tool . . . in the understanding of the dialogue,” I also share his belief that “in the long run, the shortcomings [of generational categories] outweigh the insights” (1994, 262). This view is particularly pertinent to minority writings. In the case of *fin de siglo* women’s writing, for example, some scholars (such as

Hurtado in her 1998 "Biografía de una generación") have taken the pragmatic option, adapting the dominant, generational model (whose efficacy has, of course, already been proved) to the needs of the minority. Although this can be a useful strategy in the short term at least, picking up the master's tools without considering the implications of this decision means risking unthinkingly continuing his work. The principal danger of this is, of course, that our house will thus end up looking all too similar to his.

## But Is It Any Good? Reclaiming Sentimentality for the Modern Reader

For minority groups, the dilemma of what to do with long-standing models is a real one. The only solution is to relativize both apparently universal notions of quality and their associated scholarly apparatus. As Rita Felski (1995) has argued with regard to European modernism, this means that we must start by rethinking the categories themselves.<sup>10</sup> The critical focus on canonical modernist standards based on aesthetic innovation continues to authorize as the norm the aesthetically experimental (if often ideologically conservative) works of Casanova's male contemporaries—both the Generation of 1898 and the *modernistas*—as it marginalizes "sentimental" women's fiction.<sup>11</sup> In consequence, the works of Casanova and her peers—which display comparatively few of the features normally associated with literary modernism—have been dismissed as parochial, sentimental, and of marginal interest to "modern" Spain. This has been the case at least since Padre Francisco Blanco García's 1890s dismissal of "la larga y no gloriosa serie de escritoras más o menos consagradas a la imitación y al cultivo de un género [la novela romántica] que tanto se adapta a las fogosidades y los arrebatos del sentimentalismo femenino" (1891, 388) [the long and not very glorious succession of lady writers more or less dedicated to imitation and to the cultivation of a genre (the romantic novel) that adapts so well to the fervors and ecstasies of female sentimentality].

The apparent obsession with sentimentality that underpins Blanco García's dismissal of women's writing is as deceptive in Spain as elsewhere. The reality that *fin de siglo* women frequently base their works on domestic or sentimental models and take the private sphere as their starting position has led to the swift dismissal of their works—even by feminist critics—as melodramatic, conventional, and idealized (judgments of Casanova's work that have all been made since the 1990s and that are discussed further in later chapters). My contention is, however, that many of these women—and Casanova is a prime

example—deliberately use the conventions of sentimental fiction as a smoke screen for their examination of social and political concerns, recognizing the value of literature, and narrative in particular, as an arena for describing and contesting the social realities of interest to them.<sup>12</sup>

A central concern of the present study is to examine the relationship between what Roberta Johnson calls the “form” and the “message” of Spanish modernism (2003, 5)—that is, to look at the ways in which Casanova and her contemporaries used the conventions of sentimental fiction to convey their radical message. One of my goals is thus to extend Johnson’s theory to demonstrate not only that aesthetic and social experimentation are not necessarily mutually exclusive but that it is, indeed, only when we read female-authored texts against modernist aesthetic standards that they appear to be aesthetically conservative. In consequence, it is imperative that we learn how to read these texts on their own terms and to recognize the formal experimentation that they carry out as they play with the conventions and vocabularies of a whole variety of literary genres, including the sentimental. A key means by which *fin de siglo* women sought to manipulate the conventions of the sentimental genre in order to reflect their social and political concerns was to imagine plots that did not lead their heroines to the hitherto inevitable marriage—a strategy that Rachel Blau DuPlessis has called “writing beyond the ending” (1985). In fact, Casanova and her female contemporaries increasingly reject marriage as an ending for their narratives, demonstrating the relevance of DuPlessis’s contention for Spanish women too: “It is the project of twentieth-century writers to solve the contradictions between love and quest and to replace the alternate endings in marriage and death that are their cultural legacy from nineteenth-century life and letters by offering a different set of choices” (4).

DuPlessis focuses primarily on English- and French-language sources. The choices other than absorption into a heterosexual couple or death that she cites, however, are evident too in Spanish women’s writing. We can find examples of “reparenting, woman-to-woman and brother-to-sister bonds, and forms of the communal protagonist” (1985, 5) in the works discussed in the chapters that follow. Of the female protagonists of Casanova’s early works, Mara (*El doctor Wolski*) flees Russia and her fiancé for Lithuania, where she finds a female commune; María Cruz (*Más que amor*) rejects marriage and Spain in favor of an independent life in Poland; Laura (*Princesa del amor hermoso*) refuses to marry either of her suitors, the aging Don Juan or the young Galician poet; and the story of Rosa María (*El crimen de Beira-mar*) begins after her marriage, while her husband is away working in America. Only Consuelo’s story (*Lo eterno*) ends with the conventional wedding (or at least the promise of one). Significantly, however (as I argue in Chapter 3), marriage

in this novel symbolizes not bourgeois repression but freedom and the passage into modernity. By the beginning of the next decade, the course of events was starting to change. Carmen de Burgos's short novel *La flor de la playa* (1920), for instance, is frequently cited as an example of what Johnson has called "a rather utopian idea for early twentieth-century Spain" (1999, 248). It describes a young unmarried couple who go on holiday together to Portugal to give married life a try, only to go their separate ways on their return to Madrid, when they realize that marriage is not for them. The fact that this experiment takes place in Portugal and that the return to Spain is accompanied by the restoration of moral order—especially when compared with Casanova's heroines who remain outside the dominant national space—suggests that Casanova may have been farther ahead of her time than we have tended to assume.

Casanova's exploration of the social realities outlined in *La mujer española en el extranjero*, in the context of the plots she constructs for her heroes and more pertinently her heroines, is in perpetual tension with the need for women writers to maintain a veneer of respectability—that is, to minimize, as far as possible, the inevitable hostility to their presence in the public sphere of Spanish letters. In their analysis of the different strategies that women writers have employed to authorize their participation in the public debates from which they were so often excluded, feminist narrative theorists provide a framework for examining the consequences of this tension in female-authored texts. Critics such as Susan Lanser (1992) and Robyn Warhol (1989) proceed on the understanding that because narrative voice embodies the social, economic, and literary conditions under which it has been produced, narrative discourse can be considered a cultural production, and as a result the sex of the author or narrator can play a key role in the formation of narrative meaning. Arguing that every act of authorship can be read as representing an implicit appeal for discursive authority, Lanser identifies a narrative category of "extrarepresentational" acts that offers a means by which women writers, who are often barred from overtly participating in public discourse, might gain such authority. These acts may include "reflections, judgments, generalizations about the world 'beyond' the fiction, direct addresses to the narratee, comments on the narrative process, [or] allusions to other writers and texts" (1992, 16–17).

The effect of this strategy is to mitigate the normative identification of female-authored fiction with the private, personal voice, enabling female authors to transcend the fictive world and—albeit indirectly—assert their narrative authority over the public sphere. Sometimes this proved successful, as in Concepción Gimeno's novella *Una Eva moderna* (1909), which—although

ostensibly a sentimental romance—uses dialogue between the male protagonist (a Spanish politician) and his female counterpart (an educated but domestic woman) to discuss changes in the Spanish legal code. Similarly, in Casanova's novel *Más que amor*, Carlos (also a politician) and María discuss potential changes in Spanish law with respect to religious orders. This strategy was, however, also fraught with danger: Casanova's use of Carlos to voice her belief in Poland's future political independence, for example, backfired when the Russian authorities, after being apprised of it, fined Casanova and closed down the newspaper that had published the novel (see Chapter 4 herein). The absence of a similar reaction in Spain may be a consequence of the fact that the majority of the novel's action takes place in the liminal space of epistolary contact rather than in a recognizably Spanish setting; the profoundly gendered and spatialized nature of Spanish society meant that within Spain such experimentation was all but inconceivable.

## Reading Sofía Casanova: Outline of the Study

How, then, should we approach the works of Casanova and her contemporaries? It is tempting to think that because the discursive maps of *fin de siglo* Spain were drawn up largely along gendered lines, women occupied an unproblematically passive or marginal role in the construction of the national imaginary. This is, however, very far from the case. One of the most important moves in recent feminist scholarship has been the call to acknowledge that women have been participants—often active participants—in various imperialist projects and in the forging of modern nations and modern societies and that to ignore what Charnon-Deutsch calls “the hidden scenes of collaboration” (2003, 124–25) in their works is to collude in the “forgetting” that feminist scholarship endeavors to counter. Furthermore, to read women simply as victims of essentializing patriarchy, I have learned, is to disregard the evidence of their own texts; the realization that women participated in nationalist and imperial projects, not least through the almost continual elision of differences of class, race, and ethnicity in their otherwise radically revisionary imagined landscapes, has very much shaped my understanding of Casanova and her works.

Since I began working with Casanova's texts as a graduate student in the late 1990s, I have found myself shifting from a utopian vision of the author as documenter of female and Galician oppression to a more complex analysis of her work as a site for multiple, often contradictory, representations of power relationships. The area in which this is probably most marked is Casanova's

treatment of differences of race and ethnicity—especially in her first two novels, *El doctor Wolski* and *Lo eterno*, and in the travelogue *Sobre el Volga helado*, three texts that explore the consequences of Spain's renewed imperial project in the second half of the long nineteenth century. Juxtaposing our readings of the narratives of feminine victimization that dominate Spanish women's writing through the nineteenth and into the twentieth century with the way these women write about the working classes and the subjects of Spain's former colonies (Charnon-Deutsch 2003, 125) often produces completely unexpected and unsettling readings of texts that I had previously read as straightforward and unproblematic.

My focus in this book, then, is the connections between representations of difference (largely, but not exclusively, of gender) and the emergence of the modern nation in the novels and novellas that Casanova produced during the first part of her career. I look at each of the six major narrative works that she published between 1894 and 1914 in turn, examining her settings and strategies in order to locate her works and their protagonists within contemporary debates about the place of women and other minorities in the modern nation. Underlying all is Casanova's desire—despite the fear that she so poignantly expressed in *Lo eterno* that she would always remain "extranjera en mi patria" (1907, 5–6) [a stranger in my own land]—to mark out for herself, her foremothers, her sisters, and her daughters a place in Spain's past, present, and future. The chapters that follow look at individual texts that foreground questions of women's place in society and the nation. Taking the texts in chronological order allows us to trace not only Casanova's increasing dissatisfaction with the processes by which national and gender stereotypes and grand narratives of nation, history, and literature were created but also her growing conviction that change was impossible within the dominant spaces of the modern Spanish nation.

I begin my analysis, in Chapters 2 and 3, by examining two novels that explore contrasting responses to fin de siècle fears about the breakdown of boundaries of gender, race, and class. Both *El doctor Wolski* (1894) and *Lo eterno* (1907) culminate with the protagonists' rejection of their respective home nations in favor of alternative, peripheral spaces. In Chapter 4, I consider *Más que amor* (1908), in which Casanova exploits the potential of the epistolary format to dramatize the search of the female artist for a space beyond the borders of either nation or narration. Chapters 5 and 6 investigate the shift to briefer narrative forms (the *novela corta* and short story) and Galician settings that accompanied Casanova's return to Spain after more than two decades abroad. In *Princesa del amor hermoso* (1909), *El pecado* (1911), and *El crimen de Beira-mar* (1914), she turns her attention to the process by which

cultural models of masculinity, femininity, Spanishness, and Galicianness are constructed and explores the peripheries as a potential locus for imagining social change.

I close with some observations about how a consideration of these six texts might (1) influence the reception of Casanova and her works and (2) offer a new perspective to complement the growing body of revisionist scholarship in Iberian studies that seeks to break down the boundaries and divisions, both externally imposed and internally reinforced, that continue to keep Spain at the margins of interdisciplinary studies. Works by women such as Casanova offer fascinating and often unexpected alternatives to the monolithically masculine Castile-focused version of Spanish culture that still informs many studies of the *fin de siglo* today. They demonstrate that these writers were far more than simply “la[s] autora[s] de unas novelitas” [the lady author(s) of some silly novels]—and they knew it. They were also aware, however—as Casanova put it—that “cual Atlántida que devoró el mar” [like Atlantis swallowed up by the sea], they and their works ran the risk of being submerged by what we might now, following Riley, call “the misleading familiarity of ‘history.’” Our task, then, is to challenge the familiar narrative with alternative ways of seeing, reading, and understanding the *fin de siglo*, a goal that can be achieved only through serious and searching analysis of the writings of the women who contributed so critically to this crucial period in the formation of modern Iberian identities.