

# Introduction

## A Spanish Public Sphere?

*David Jiménez Torres and  
Leticia Villamediana González*



Public opinion has been circulating for many days and even years without a real meaning, it having proved impossible until today to fix one . . . everyone has understood it in their own way and according to how it may benefit their particular interests and opinions.

—*La Abeja española*, 1813

What is the public sphere and how has it operated in Spain from the Enlightenment to the present day? These are the two core questions that drive the focus of this book and of its individual chapters. They are also two questions that are clearly interrelated. How we conceptualise such an ambiguous and multifaceted phenomenon as the ‘public sphere’ will determine how we chart its presence and historical evolution in the Spanish case. And tracing this presence and evolution will, in turn, throw up empirical data that will help us refine our understanding of the public sphere at a transnational level. Our aim in this introduction is to flesh out the approach that this book takes towards both these issues, and what value this approach has in furthering our understanding of them. Here we will also expand into a number of issues that make the Spanish case interesting to debates over the nature of the public sphere, before foregrounding the content of the rest of the volume.

It is worth pointing out that Spain has a peculiar relationship with the idea of the public sphere. When the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas developed his formulation of this concept, he did so by analysing the historical evolution of three European nations (Great Britain, France and Germany) as well as an American one (the United States). It was there that Habermas observed the rise of the coffee houses, the early periodical press and other forms of communication and sociability that he saw as crucial in the configuration of a bourgeois public sphere. Thus, the most influential account of what the public sphere ‘was’ (or, more accurately, ‘was meant to be’) and

how it came about during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries left Spain out of its empirical framework. When discussing the rise of the bourgeois public sphere, then, leading scholars did not see Spain as an important point of reference. For instance, while Barker and Burrows' *Press, Politics and the Public Sphere in Europe and North America (1760–1820)* provides a fascinating, albeit incomplete, look at the role of the press in politics in Western culture in the Revolutionary Era, Spain is not included in the study. For the most part, this omission is a result of the historiography of the Spanish eighteenth century, a period that was wrongly – as the three first chapters of this volume will demonstrate – considered by some critics as an infertile parenthesis between the Spanish Golden Age and the Romantic period.

Nowadays, however, the story is very different. Much of the popular and academic discourse surrounding our contemporary public sphere highlights the increasingly important role played by online media and resources. It is generally accepted that the onset of the digital age has transformed the Western public sphere in a number of ways. And, when it comes to discussing the first tangible sociopolitical repercussions of this transformation of the public sphere, most authors will refer to the demonstrations that took place in Spain in 2011 (what is generally referred to as the *indignados* or 15-M movement) and the repercussions that this has had over the years in the country's political makeup – particularly given the rise of new political parties Podemos and Ciudadanos. There is, indeed, a smooth progression from *TIME* magazine's naming of 'You' (meaning the individual content generator in the World Wide Web) as the 2006 Person of the Year and its designating 'The Protester' – with explicit reference to the Spanish *indignados* – as its Person of the Year for 2011. In a world where the public sphere is being redefined by the openness and connectivity fostered by the Internet, the type of mobilisation this has allowed (wide-reaching, publicity-oriented, content-generating and diffusely led) is, many accounts suggest, best exemplified by a citizens' movement in Spain. Even more recently, online connectivity has proven fundamental in the mobilisation of pro- and anti-independence Catalans throughout the ongoing standoff between separatists in that region and the central government and other state structures. We can thus see how the nation that was marginalised from accounts of the public sphere that hinged on bourgeois sociability and print media is now a fundamental point of reference in accounts of the public sphere during the digital age.

That this change could have taken place is, in one sense, a testimony of the transformations in Spain over the past 300 years and of the ways in which they have been interpreted. From the beginning of the

eighteenth century, Spain has participated in all the major movements and transformations that we have come to associate with European modernisation: a transitioning away from the structures of the *ancien régime* to those of a modern liberal polity, a transformation from a primarily rural and agricultural society to an urban and service-based one, a gradual increase in literacy rates until the achievement of full alphabetisation in the second half of the twentieth century, the concomitant appearance of mass culture(s), technological transformations from the railroad to the digital revolution, a transformation in gender roles towards greater equality among the sexes and greater openness to nonheteronormative options, etc. It has experienced many of the political regimes we have come to associate with modernity, such as nineteenth-century liberal constitutionalism, parliamentary republics, military dictatorships (in some cases, as in the long rule of General Francisco Franco, with significant borrowings from totalitarianism) and, in recent decades, full Western democracy – with all its caveats, limitations and discontents.

However, many of these transformations have taken place in a later, less recognisable and more fractious manner than how they happened in other countries, particularly France, Great Britain, Germany or the United States. This has given rise to a recurring theme in scholarship on modern Spain: the question of this country's normality-or-not as regards processes whose normative forms are deemed to be found elsewhere. Political and economic historians have thus asked themselves whether there was a bourgeois revolution in Spain in the same way that literary scholars have wondered whether there was a Spanish Enlightenment/Romanticism/Realism/Modernism. Of course, this is a selective understanding of 'normality', whereby the leading industrialised countries are taken to be representatives of a normative version of modernity. But beyond the problems that this logic may pose, it casts an influential shadow over the issue of the public sphere in Spain. Habermas' linking of a robust bourgeois public sphere with the processes of European modernisation makes the study of the former a sensible fulcrum for questions over Spain's adherence to the latter. Thus, it is easy to find claims that present the formation of a Spanish public sphere in Spain as faulty or incomplete. In his discussion of eighteenth-century Spanish academies, for example, and in comparing them to their British or French equivalents, Ruiz Torres (2008: 322–27) argues that:

[R]oyal patronage was necessary for the survival of these tribunals of reason, and this speaks volumes about the as-yet difficult separation

between the private public sphere and the realm of power of the absolute monarchy. In the United Kingdom, where the political system allowed for a greater degree of liberty, things were very different, but in Spain academies underwent a similar process to that which had taken place in France under the reign of Louis XIV. They became institutions under the patronage and protection of the king ... outside of them there could be intellectuals who were independent and critical of servile attitudes towards the king, like Voltaire and the other French 'philosophers', but this attitude barely manifested itself in Spain. The subordination of the private public sphere to the governmental one had a negative impact among us on the development of a public opinion which was not mediated by political power.

The study of the public sphere in Spain is thus strongly related to some of the paradigms through which Spanish history has been studied – something that many of the chapters in the present volume will attest to in their engagement with existing scholarship on their topic. But if the public sphere says something about Spain, we should also consider that Spain says something about the public sphere. In other words, the particularities of the Spanish case also highlight the very polysemy and adaptability of the term itself. Habermas famously defined it (in his 1962 classic *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit*, translated into English as *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*) as a realm between the individual and the state, a space of free inquiry and discussion where differences of social status were bracketed, in which private citizens gathered to form a cohesive public, and that was fundamental in fostering the type of social modernisation that marked the passage from the structures of the *ancien régime* to advanced bourgeois democracies. Although Habermas himself (as Kitts reminds us in Chapter 1 of this book) was referring to an ideal conception of the public sphere rather than a historical reality, the pretended normativity of his definition has come under sustained criticism over the past few decades. The book was born in controversy and has continued to spark it since then. Scholars have examined how the ideal of the public sphere actually operated in historical practice, while also projecting the concept into the present and using it to inform new research and new critical theory. Critics such as Nancy Fraser have pointed out that the public sphere, as conceived by Habermas, fails both as a normative ideal and as the description of a historical process: in the first instance, because 'a' public sphere would be less preferable than a multiplicity of competing publics, where previously 'subaltern counterpublics' could challenge dominant discourses. Moreover, Landes (1988) and Fraser (1992), among many others, have argued that the ideal of the

bourgeois public sphere served, historically, as a legitimization of new and/or continued forms of class and gender domination. The long and often polemical afterlife of Habermas' thesis is thus proof that, while we find it useful to talk of a 'public sphere' as a feature of modern Western societies, the precise definition of this term and the conceptual tools we should draw on to study it remain a point of disagreement. Moreover, study of the Spanish public sphere also sheds a unique light on some of these problems, such as the relationship between public sphere and nationalism, the role of religion in the public sphere, the issue of who and through what social dynamics ends up occupying a central role in public debate, and the links between the public sphere and civil rights.

## **The Public Sphere and Nation-Building**

The concept of the public sphere dovetails strongly into one of the main sources of interest in modern Spain: nationalism and nation-building. Contemporary scholarship on the issue has in recent decades been strongly influenced by the 'weak nationalisation' thesis, according to which Spain's nation-building process from the end of the eighteenth century through to the beginning of the twenty-first century – with particular emphasis on the 'age of nationalism' in the nineteenth century – would have been substantially weaker than those in other countries. This would explain why Spanish nationalism and the Spanish liberal state had not achieved the success of, say, their French counterparts in terms of nationalising the masses. And this would serve as an explicative key for many of the presumed particularities in contemporary Spanish history, such as the country's fractious evolution towards liberal democracy, the persistence of civil conflict well into the twentieth century, the difficult emergence of a state whose legitimacy was based on secular values and citizens' rights, the complicated relationship with internal linguistic and cultural plurality, etc.

This is relevant to examinations of the Spanish public sphere if we consider that two of the leading theorists of studies on nationalism and nation-building, Ernest Gellner and Benedict Anderson, emphasised that nationalism needs a 'national culture'. The latter would, in effect, operate as a nationalised space in which communication would be both possible and frequent, both in practical and in symbolic terms. To a certain extent, then, one could argue that the process of nationalisation would overlap with the process of forming a national public sphere. But this raises the crucial question of the relationship

to political power. One of the main strands in contemporary imaginations of the Spanish nation has been the sense of a disconnect between political elites and the Spanish 'people', understood as the repository of national essences. We might, for example, think of the success of Ortega y Gasset's metaphor of an *España oficial* and an *España vital*, which would lead two separate existences; a metaphor that influenced different prescriptions of nationalisation from above (from those of the Partido Reformista in the 1910s to those of the Falange Española in the 1930s). Ortega's metaphor posited that one of Spain's failures was the incapacity of the public sphere to channel the arguments of the *España vital* into the policies of the *España oficial*. The public sphere's separation from the realm of political power would thus be deleterious for national modernisation and for the modern project of a truly and organically 'nationalised' state; in Ortega's words, the problem was the existence of 'dos Españas que viven juntas y que son perfectamente extrañas' (two Spains that live together and yet remain perfectly separate from one another) (Ortega y Gasset 1966: 273). Again, the issue here is what is the right degree of separation between the nation-state and the public sphere: even going beyond the question of influence on political actors, would state-sponsored initiatives to foment a nationalised sphere of communications, by improving infrastructures or by favouring one official language over others, not be considered an important part of the process whereby a public sphere is formed? Indeed, while most of the 'weak nationalisation' thesis is based on the presumed failure of Spanish institutions such as the army or the educational system in their drive to generate social cohesion across the national territory, or on the failures of successive governments in terms of creating modern infrastructures that would make the ideal of a shared national space a reality, much emphasis is also placed on the Spanish state's inability to establish a linguistically homogeneous public sphere throughout the country, or in the failure at successfully integrating within its institutions and frameworks those communities whose mother tongue differed from that of the central state.

This links very clearly with the issue of minority cultures and languages such as Basque, Catalan and Galician, and the role they have played throughout the centuries in the Spanish public sphere. At times marginalised and stigmatised by central government policies that favoured Castilian as 'the' national language, and at times vigorously vindicated by local elites and civil organisations in more propitious political circumstances – such as the early twentieth century or the post-1978 *Estado de las Autonomías* – they form a fascinating case study for the question of whether, in plurilingual societies, we can

truly speak of 'a' public sphere or of a multiplicity of publics instead. Publications and rites of sociability carried out in Basque, Catalan and Galician have often set themselves up as separate from those carried out in the wider, Spanish-speaking context. To the extent that they have, at certain moments and in the hands of certain historical actors, attempted to operate as the basis for cultural and political projects that would be distinct from those in Spain as a whole, we could consider them to operate as 'counter-publics'. Nancy Fraser's point that 'participation means being able to speak in one's own voice' adopts a particularly pertinent and thought-provoking character in these cases (Gripsrud et al. 2010). Indeed, in their vindication of the use of minority languages as vehicles for communication and culture, movements like the Catalan *Renaixença* or the Galician *Rexurdimento* postulated the existence of public spheres that would in some ways be separate from the wider, Castilian-language one.

However, it remains difficult to consider the Basque Country, Catalonia or Galicia as functioning in the modern period within their own, hermetically sealed public spheres. On the one hand, a large number of Basque, Catalan and Galician authors and thinkers have participated in the same public debates as those from the rest of Spain, and, indeed, had great hand in shaping them: Miguel de Unamuno, Emilia Pardo Bazán, Eugenio d'Ors, Fernando Savater, Jon Juaristi and Josep Ramoneda are good examples of this. On the other hand, the bilingual social reality of these communities (particularly in the twentieth century) as well as the reach of national means of mass communication such as newspapers, radio and television make it difficult to think of hermetically sealed public spheres in those communities. This is particularly the case with Basque, with its low rate of native monolingual speakers even in the nineteenth century, and where even the more radically identity-based movements have operated fundamentally in Spanish. It is therefore more plausible to think of linguistically distinct spheres that nevertheless overlap and communicate in fundamental ways, and that are hard to extricate from one another. Thus, in the case of literature written in Catalonia, Martí Monterde (2013: 68–70) has argued that 'in Catalonia there are, and have been for a very long time . . . two completely different literary systems'; yet this makes Catalonia 'an interliterary community', or what he later reformulates as a 'doubly interliterary community'. Most recently, Vila-Sanjuan (2018) has vindicated the centuries-old tradition of Castilian-language Catalan culture.

Another interesting point in this regard is the relationship between the public spheres in minority languages and the relationship to power.

To the extent that Basque, Catalan and Galician were sidelined and stigmatised during the Franco period, for example, and thus largely confined to the domestic sphere, we could consider them as having gone through a process of nonpublicness as a result of the actions being undertaken by political leaders. Later, the policies of linguistic 'normalisation' (i.e. promotion of the public use of these languages) pursued during the democratic period have linked a revitalised public use of these languages to powerful devolved governments and administrations, who have sponsored their use through public subsidies and other state-sponsored initiatives. While there are currently more cultural products, media outlets and avenues of monolingual communication open for Basque, Catalan and Galician speakers than probably at any other point in Spanish history, this dependence on public policy questions the tenet that a public sphere must be separate from political power. Again speaking about the Catalan case, Josep Antoni Fernández (2008: 17) has spoken of a double discontent that would be 'constitutive of the contemporary Catalan cultural camp': discontent at Catalan culture's presumed subaltern status to Spanish culture and discontent at culture's subordination to political power. Authors like Valentí Puig (2012, 2014, 2015) have even questioned whether institutional projects to create a mass culture in a minority language do not generate their own problems in terms of reducing overall quality and creating a thematic solipsism around issues that concern public bodies, such as the benefits of independence from Spain. It is also worth noticing that powers that affect the public sphere in these communities do not necessarily have to be institutional or to be fundamentally linked to linguistic issues. Indeed, one of the fundamental issues affecting the Basque public sphere between the 1960s and the 2010s was the spectre of violence cast by the terrorist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA), which targeted not only Spanish police but also journalists and intellectuals who expressed views contrary to those of radical Basque nationalism. An important driver for research into contemporary Basque culture and society has thus been the effect that the existence of terrorist violence has on public discussion and social dynamics.

There are other historical instances in the Spanish case that throw up interesting questions over the public sphere's relationship to nationhood and nation-building. We might consider, for example, the importance of the exile communities that Spain's fractious political history has generated, from the *austracistas* who supported the Habsburg candidacy to the Spanish throne in the War of Spanish Succession, to the liberals who had to seek refuge in London following absolutist restoration in the first half of the nineteenth century, to the Republicans



who had to leave Spain following the Francoist victory in 1939. Many of these exile communities created their own publications and their own sites of sociability, yet there are also numerous instances of exchanges between them and the Spain they had left behind, as well as plenty of cases of integration of their works and their ideas into national culture once the circumstances that forced their exile changed.

The issue of public spheres beyond the borders of peninsular Spain also points to the important relationship between Spanish culture and politics and those of Spanish America. This is worthy of consideration not only during the period prior to the achievement of political independence (the early nineteenth century in the majority of cases and the 1890s in the case of Cuba and Puerto Rico), but also in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The frequent intellectual exchanges between Spain and its former colonies, as well as the presence and participation of public intellectuals (such as Ortega y Gasset, Max Aub, Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa) in more than one national public sphere at the same time, once again bring into question whether we can think of singular, cohesive public spheres or, rather, of realms of discursive exchange that transcend national boundaries. This is particularly pertinent when we examine the various projects for pan-Hispanic cultural identity that were taken up by various cultural and political groups throughout the years, and that were often predicated on a strengthening of intellectual and cultural exchanges among Spanish-speaking countries and the creation of a truly pan-Hispanic sphere of shared discussion.

## **Reason and Religion**

Modern Spanish history also provides ample evidence of one of the primary tension points in the idea of the public sphere: its relation to religion. The strong link that Habermas established between the appearance of a public sphere and the ideals of the Enlightenment (and, specifically, the idea that public discussions should be carried out on the basis of 'reason' rather than faith or dogma) posits a framework that equates the emergence of a public sphere with a substantive, and increasing, secularisation of society.

The Spanish state's strong relationship with Catholicism throughout the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as well as the role that the Church played – both formally and informally – in regulating what could and could not be discussed in Spanish society, would thus have been an impediment to the development of a public

sphere. Ruiz Torres (2008: 471), in reference to the late eighteenth century, has argued that ‘the negative effects of orthodox Catholicism’s predominance in the formation of an enlightened public sphere are evident’. This type of argument could be extended well through the first two-thirds of the twentieth century if we consider the role that Church censors played in the regulation of public discussion during the Franco dictatorship.

And yet, if we take the wider view, we might see the strong presence of Catholicism in Spanish society throughout the modern era as in some ways acting as a stimulus on the public sphere. For one of the most sustained and intense debates in modern Spain has been the public role that religion should have in a society whose state was officially Catholic and in which the Church wielded enormous power and authority. Indeed, the privateness or publicness of religion has in itself been one of the strongest spurs to public debate in Spain, in a similar way to what happened in neighbouring countries such as France or Italy, and in a manner that complicates the neatness of the distinction between private matters and matters of general interest. We might think of the strong public controversies occasioned by literary works that dealt with the intersection between religion, private conduct and public life, such as Leopoldo Alas’ *La regenta* (1884) or Benito Pérez Galdós’ *Electra* (1901). Or we might think about the work of influential lay Catholic intellectuals like Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo or Ramiro de Maeztu, whose interventions in public debates explicitly hinged on their faith as the basis for arguments regarding the present and desired future of Spain. We might also consider the importance of figures and organisations like Ángel Herrera Oria and the Asociación Católica Nacional de Propagandistas, whose decision that Catholicism needed to have a vigorous presence in the public sphere (through periodicals, public lectures and sites of sociability) helped adapt Catholic social identities to the political frameworks of pluralistic societies. Lastly, Antonio Cazorla Sánchez (2013) has shown how young priests steeped in the ideas of Vatican II were instrumental in bringing issues that had for decades remained ‘unsayable’ into the public sphere in several rural areas during the later years of the Francoist regime.

Another of the ways in which religious issues affected the vitality of the public sphere in Spain is in the configuration of what we might again term ‘counter-publics’. The stability of the Spanish liberal state was from the beginning questioned by the Carlist movement, which believed in a traditionalist state whose legitimacy was directly derived from religion rather than from the liberal concept of public opinion. In certain regions, such as Navarre, Carlism configured itself as a cultural

and social force in its own right – one that remained critical of, and self-consciously separate from, the emerging liberal national culture of the nineteenth century. Álvarez Junco (2001: 361) has even stated that Carlism was possibly ‘the most important Spanish socio-political movement of the nineteenth century’. Over the years, the movement developed its own publications, cultural practices and sites of sociability, fomenting a separate public sphere that proved remarkably durable. And the Carlist counter-public was replicated on the other side of the political spectrum in the anti-clerical movement, often linked with Republican political culture, and remained a significant feature of public life right up to the end of the twentieth century. Some of the most important sites of progressive sociability in modern Spain, such as the *Residencia de Estudiantes*, were directly linked to efforts to generate alternatives to Catholic-influenced forms of bourgeois sociability.

### **Participation in the Public Sphere: Are Some More Equal than Others?**

The complex relationship between public and counter-public(s) is not circumscribed to political affiliation or to position vis-à-vis specific issues such as the social role of religion. It also engages with questions of class, gender and the social dynamics through which cultural legitimacy is created (or contested). Indeed, one of the more problematic issues with the public sphere is how we might reconcile its supposed openness to all citizens with the fact that debate has often been monopolised by very small, and very particular, groups of individuals. The most conspicuous case in this regard is the exclusion of women and the working class from the emerging forms of bourgeois sociability that have been identified as the models for a functioning public sphere. The Spanish *academias* that sprung up in the eighteenth century, for example, were mostly restricted to male members, and even then remained quite reticent to accept men without a nobiliary title or a university degree (Ruiz Torres 2008: 428). Scholars have also questioned whether the separation between ‘private matters’ and ‘matters of public interest’ did not simply serve to shut out of public discussion issues that affected women’s lives (Bolufer Peruga 2006). Indeed, one of the more important battles in the modern emancipation of women was the reframing of public discourse in order to shed light on issues (such as domestic abuse) that had been previously considered ‘private’. Pamela Radcliff’s study on women and associationism

during the Francoist period has shown, in this regard, that the idioms of domesticity had to be reformulated before issues important to ordinary women were able to achieve publicity (Radcliff 2011). As for class, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spain witnessed the rise of a working-class culture that was often built in direct opposition to that of the bourgeoisie, and in which publications or sociability played a very important role in generating contestatory politics (such as those of the unions). In the later decades of the twentieth century, this division between publics according to class seemed to become paved over by the triumph of postmodern popular culture and the 'culture of consensus' of the new democratic Spain, but it has come to the fore again in recent years following the post-2008 political, social and economic crisis.

Another issue that has attracted considerable scrutiny is that of the mechanisms through which certain individuals end up having a central and recurrent role in the public sphere. While the ideal of the public sphere is that it should be open to anyone and thus impossible to monopolise, its study inevitably leads to the study of figures who either by trade or inclination make their presence in the public sphere an important element of their careers. In the Spanish case we might look at the line that runs from the *novatores* of the seventeenth century to the *hombres de letras* (man of letters) of the eighteenth, the *escritores* (writers) of the nineteenth century and eventually the *intelectuales* of the twentieth century. Indeed, according to Santos Juliá (2004: 10), intellectuals are cosubstantial with the public sphere: 'intellectuals exist, then, from the moment in which a public sphere is formed which those who are "specialists in the handling of symbolic goods" may access as individuals, free from corporativist ties or from ecclesiastical or nobiliary bonds of patronage'. In Juliá's view, a modern capitalist society generated the type of spaces and ventures that allowed intellectuals to reach a wide public and to live both in and off the public sphere. But while the existence of intellectuals would, in one sense, *prove* the existence of a thriving Spanish public sphere, it also forces upon us a number of questions. First, through what means do some participants in the public sphere achieve more notoriety and importance than others? In other words, what 'makes' an intellectual, or what leads his or her fellow citizens to recognise them as somebody worth paying attention to? The intuition that the mechanisms that determine success in this regard are not restricted to the formulation of superior or more persuasive arguments (as the idealised notion of the public sphere would have it) has generally produced fruitful suggestions, such as Bourdieu's emphasis on 'distinction' and cultural capital. And,

in the concrete Spanish case, there has been no shortage of literature on the ways in which certain intellectual groups (like the supposed *generación del 98* or the figures associated with the post-Franco *cultura de la Transición*) or individuals (such as José Ortega y Gasset) have created and retained their prominence in public discussions. A related issue would be whether these presumed central actors of the public sphere really address a totality of the public or whether they merely address an elite that self-selects on the basis of education and shared cultural referents, and that is disproportionately represented in cultural or intellectual history. In a nation that struggled for a long time with low educational rates and with very fragmented national communications, who, we might ask, were the real publics of figures such as Larra or Unamuno?

### **The Public Sphere and Civil Rights**

Another central feature in the idea of the public sphere is its relation to the development of civil liberties. Like all liberal policies, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spain developed a gradual (if discontinuous) increase in the legal guarantees for rights related to participation in the public sphere: the right of assembly, the right of publication, the right to free speech, etc. The vitality of the Spanish press, for example, has been historically marked by important pieces of legislation such as the Ley de imprenta of 1883 and the Ley de prensa e imprenta (or 'Ley Fraga') of 1966. However, these rights were, at least until 1978, always exercised under the watchful tutelage of the state, which could – and indeed often did – act in a number of ways to restrict them. This is very clear in the case of the eighteenth century, in which the twin powers of the Consejo de Castilla and the Inquisition gave both king and Church great powers to restrict debate; the effect of this, according to Ruiz Torres (2008: 436), was to 'apenas dejó espacio para una opinión pública independiente' (it hardly left any space for an independent public sphere). Dependence on state patronage also meant that new sites of sociability were strongly linked to political power, and the Inquisition retained its role as a bulwark against heterodox social and political ideals coming from elsewhere in Europe until its final abolition in 1834. Even after this, two important mechanisms remained in place that heavily restricted what could be said in Spain, at least in print form: both the exercise of prior censorship of publications and the government's prerogative to suspend the publication of specific periodicals if they were deemed to pose a threat to public order. This

later prerogative was liberal and discretionally used, even during outwardly democratic regimes such as the Second Republic of 1931–36. Institutions based on public and open debate like Madrid's Athenaeum were also occasionally shut down by authoritarian regimes, such as the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923–30). And the restrictions on civil liberties during General Franco's rule have often been understood to have had a deeper social effect than that of simply impeding specific publications during the 1939–75 period. Indeed, the 'weak nationalisation' thesis has found a curious partner recently in the 'weak democratic culture' paradigm, which would point to the idea that civil society in democratic Spain has been weak in comparison to those of other Western democracies, precisely due to the negative after-effects of low participation in the public sphere during the Franco dictatorship. Much literature in this sense does not explicitly refer to the public sphere, preferring instead terms such as 'civil society' and 'democratic participation', but it clearly replicated some of the main characteristics of the ideal of the bourgeois public sphere: an intermediate space between 'private life' and 'the state', made up of citizens' associations and spaces of public discussion, in which citizens could participate irrespective of social status, in which direct or mediated discussion would be both a means and an end, and where emerging consensus could either check or influence political action. The idea here would be that even after the achievement of civil liberties that allow for participation in the public sphere, Spanish society would have been incapable of using them effectively.

We could, however, also look at this issue from the opposite angle, focusing on the successes instead of the restrictions. It is evident, for example, that the existence of strong censorship mechanisms did not block the proliferation of a vigorous print culture in Spain during the eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries. According to Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere institutionalised a practice of rational-critical discourse on political matters (Calhoun 1993: 9), and this critical reasoning entered the press during the eighteenth century, creating a new genre of periodicals. In the Spanish case, these periodicals and moral weeklies provided the ideal forum for the debates in the revitalisation of Spain and its Atlantic colonies, working to shape public opinion about issues important to Spain's interests, both at home and abroad. Nor should we overlook the fundamental role during the same period of sites of sociability that, while often linked to leisure activities, could also function as places of discussion and even of contestatory politics, such as the *Sociedades de Amigos del país* (Economic Societies), theatres, coffeeshops, *tertulias* (social

gatherings), concert halls, public gardens and promenades, stadiums, rural and urban *casinos*, athenaeums and even bullfighting arenas. It is also worth examining the enormous role that a public sphere that had already grown significantly independent of state control during the 1960s played in Spain's successful transition to democracy, as well as the role that civic associations created during the second half of the Francoist regime played in socialising citizens in democratic modes of participation, thus paving the way for their acceptance of the new constitutional regime once this became a possibility. Whichever way we decide to look at this issue, then, we can see that the ideal of a public sphere of open entry and free discussion, and that remained significantly detached from the reach of political power, existed, for the period contained within this volume, in a tense equilibrium between the prerogatives of state power and the enormous drive and creativity of civil society.

## The Aims and Overview of the Present Volume

Therefore, the historical development of the ideal of the public sphere has been full of tensions, many of which manifest themselves in a clear fashion in the Spanish historical experience. It is because of all this that the present volume refrains from any rigid and *a priori* understanding of what the public sphere 'is' or 'should be', of how it 'began' or where and under what circumstances it 'arrived' in Spain. For even if the definition of this term were not as contentious as it generally is, it would be foolhardy to apply it to as long a timespan as 300+ years and to as complex and multifaceted a social, cultural and political entity as modern Spain. Thus, rather than compiling a volume that would pretend to act as an encyclopaedia, we have preferred to bring together a number of case studies covering the period that goes from the Enlightenment to the present day and that refer to the many phenomena that are commonly taken, both in academic and in popular discourse, to be associated with the public sphere. These range from the historical development of print media to the social role of rumours, from the theories and activities of public intellectuals to the fluctuating currency of specific linguistic terms, and from the pressure exerted by professional interest groups on early nineteenth-century liberal governments to the organisation of citizen protests against early twenty-first-century economic policies.

As the reader will observe, some of the authors engage with Habermas' theses directly, while some prefer to utilise it as a source

of terminology with which to discuss specific social, cultural and political phenomena. We believe that both approaches are not only valid but also interdependent: the public sphere is at its most useful when it functions as a loose umbrella term that allows us to inquire, from many different perspectives, into a range of topics related to our common social, cultural and political life, and that share a focus on social communication. This allows for a bottom-up approach to the question of the public sphere in general and of its Spanish variant in particular. This is why we prefer to talk about the 'configuration' of the public sphere rather than its 'emergence', so as to signal an open-ended and multifaceted process that is difficult to grasp in its totality, but that lends itself to suggestive case studies. In short, the Spanish public sphere that emerges from this volume is a radically complex phenomenon that resists neat interpretations and categorisations, gesturing instead to its irreducible density and dynamism.

The volume's opening chapter is a thorough examination by Sally-Ann Kitts of the application (and applicability) of the Habermasian paradigm to the study of eighteenth-century Spain. This chapter provides an exhaustive and useful overview of scholarship related to the Spanish public sphere and suggests a Spanish 'double normality' when it comes to the Habermasian model. In other words, Spain would be 'normal' insofar as its development of spaces and practices of bourgeois sociability and a modern press fit Habermas' understanding of a public sphere, and it is also 'normal' in the ways in which it offers empirical support to the many criticisms and refinements that have been made of the Habermasian model (mainly in relation to the groups that were shut out of the bourgeois public sphere, thus giving the lie to its pretence of universality of access). The Spanish case, Kitts proposes, supports our usage of Habermas' notion of the public sphere as a strongly caveated heuristic with which to understand the development of eighteenth-century European societies.

Noelia García Díaz's chapter focuses on the Benedictine monk Benito Jerónimo Feijoo, one of the most prominent Spanish *ilustrados* whose enormously popular *Teatro crítico universal* (1726–39) and *Cartas eruditas y curiosas* (1742–60) represented a milestone in the Spanish public sphere. The chapter analyses Feijoo's privileged relationship with the Bourbon monarchy, which explicitly endorsed his works over those of his critics, yet also made clear what the limits of his writings could be, thus questioning to what extent the emergence of a public sphere in Spain really operated (and, indeed, was even liable to operate) in a way that was independent of political power.



Another element closely linked to the development of this bourgeois public sphere was the concept of politeness and the notion of civil society. How to behave properly constituted a filter or essential requirement to enter the new social and 'public' spaces, and codes of behaviour became more generalised between upper classes in eighteenth-century Europe. Taking this as a starting point, Mónica Bolufer Peruga's chapter studies these notions of politeness, good manners, civility and urbanity throughout Spanish travellers' accounts in Great Britain – the Count of Fernán Nuñez, Antonio Ponz, the Marquis of Ureña and Leandro Fenández de Moratín – comparing how cultivated behaviour was conceived in both countries. The analysis of these travellers' discourses and descriptions of the English character shows how these codes were used to define and oppose national and social identities as well as to measure the social progress of nations during the Enlightenment.

Francisco A. Eissa-Barroso engages in novel ways with the enormous consequences that the Napoleonic invasion of Spain, and the subsequent uprising known as the Peninsular War or Guerra de la Independencia, had for the Spanish public sphere. This chapter provides an interesting examination of how news of the uprising was handled in one of the territories that would soon cease to be part of the Spanish Empire: New Spain, or contemporary Mexico. In so doing, it provides not just a glimpse of the many semi-autonomous public spheres that had been generated in the diverse parts of the Spanish Empire, but also a convincing account of how they experienced their own share of the tensions between a rising bourgeois public and an *ancien régime* political structure that was undergoing radical challenge and redefinition.

Richard Meyer Forsting's chapter is focused on a professional group that was fundamental to the various developments of the Spanish nineteenth century: the military. Focusing on the Liberal Triennium of 1820–23, the author examines the role played by the Spanish army in creating a liberal public sphere and advancing the cause of early Spanish liberalism. Through an analysis of the various newspapers associated with military factions and leaders, the chapter explores the association of the army with liberalism and what effect this had on its divisions, its appeal to the masses and ultimately its failure to establish a stable liberal state. His work shows a substantial fragmentation among the periodicals published by members of this profession, often in relation to events affecting the entire country, thus pointing to the growing complexity of the Spanish public sphere and to the difficult separation between sectoral and national discussions. Moreover,

this case study allows us to understand the paradoxical relationship between a theoretical commitment to free discussion and the reliance on an institution predicated on force, hierarchy and discipline – an issue common to a number of nascent liberal policies and that lies at the heart of some of the discrepancies between idealised notions of the public sphere and the reality of specific decades and societies.

Andrew Ginger's chapter, for its part, provides a novel take on the question of how the public sphere was conceived in mid to late nineteenth-century Spain. Ginger employs a quantitative linguistic approach in order to, as he claims, 'work outward from the notion of the *public* itself' and into the question of how Spaniards understood the public sphere and their own relationship to it. Remaining thoughtfully aware of all the methodological and conceptual problems involved in this type of enquiry, he unpicks the evidence available in published texts to help us understand what people had in mind when they addressed 'public' matters. The recurrence of terms like *España*, *nacional*, *derecho*, *ley*, *escuela* and *higiene* provide a sound footing from which to examine broader issues of nationalism versus universalism and the dynamic relationship between state- and society-formation.

Alba González Sanz's chapter on Aurora Rodríguez Carballeira bridges several divides: that between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, that between a male-dominated public sphere and the reformist efforts being put forward by women, and that between the public and private realms. It does this by examining Rodríguez Carballeira's project to create a 'new woman' through eugenics and particularly through her remarkable daughter Hildegart Rodríguez. González Sanz's chapter shows how something that, in the Habermasian paradigm, had belonged to the private realm – motherhood and home-study – could be utilised by reform-minded women as a way of intervening in public discussion. This case study offers a practical demonstration of how the role and activities of women during the nineteenth century complicate neat public/private distinctions, which are, in turn, so important to considerations of what a 'public sphere' might be.

Stephen G.H. Roberts' chapter, for its part, highlights how the notion of a public sphere was – at least in the early twentieth century – often predicated on a dynamic theory of the nation, one that focused on how the latter's energies should be channelled into the former by the figure of the intellectual. Or we might also flip the dynamic around and consider that some modern ideas of the Spanish nation were predicated on the existence of a common space of debate and deliberation – and, indeed, in some cases did not imply much beyond this – that closely mirrors Habermas' concept of the public sphere. Roberts highlights

these dynamics and relationships through the fundamental figure of Miguel de Unamuno, somebody who not only forged one of the most successful and most influential models of a public intellectual in Spain, but who also developed – both discursively and through his actions – a public sphere in constant tension with both the state and the individual. It is not only that Unamuno seems to have lived quite comfortably in the public sphere of his time; he also conceptualised the public sphere as a space *to live in*.

This introduction of the nation as a potentially overlapping category with that of the public sphere, but that also exists in a dynamic and symbiotic relationship with it, links perfectly with Marta García Carrión's chapter. Her study provides a detailed and thoughtful examination of how we can introduce as significant a phenomenon as the rise of the film industry and its insertion into the cultural landscape of the early twentieth century into our understanding of an evolving public sphere as well as a national cultural politics. As she explains, the appearance of a mass leisure industry took place within efforts to nationalise the public sphere, while, at the same time, the latter was becoming more democratic and 'the masses' (the same masses who were beginning to flock to picture shows) were becoming a significant political actor. This not only placed a certain demand on the role that cinema was to play in the public sphere of the twentieth century, but also pushed for a new understanding of the private/public divide. Indeed, while most historical accounts of the public sphere focus on classic spaces for leisure and sociability (cafés, theatres, bourgeois social spaces) or on the three main modes of journalism (the printed press, the radio and the television, with a growing focus on online and digital communication), this chapter emphasises the importance of the cinema both as a site of sociability in its own right and also as an instrument through which a large 'public' was given certain cohesion, and was exposed to cultural and political interpellation. This importance was clearly seized upon by the Francoist regime, which utilised the cinema (through its propagandistic newsreels *No-Do*) as a space in which large sections of the public could be exposed to government-sanctioned messages on everything from current affairs to national identity.

This division is also questioned in Francisco Sevillano's chapter, which takes us to the other side of the Spanish Civil War and into the long dictatorship of General Franco. The cultural stigmatisation of the very idea of public discussion that took place in the immediate postwar period forces us to sharpen our understanding of the way in which public opinion is generated. The animosity of Francoist ideologues towards an unrestrained and empowered 'public' throws

into sharp relief the historical and ideological link between notions of the public sphere and the kind of classic liberalism that Francoism was determined to eradicate. However, the regime's obsession with rumours served to update this animosity and incorporate it into the fight against a more contemporary enemy: communism. Throughout, the author places the Spanish experience into the broader conceptual and methodological frame from which we might study concepts like public opinion or social communication in repressive contexts.

Daniel Mourenza's chapter brings us out of the years of dictatorship and into the democratic period. It does so by exploring the creation of a social, political and cultural consensus during the Transition (the country's adoption of a democratic system following the death of General Franco in 1975), as well as the unravelling of this consensus in the early 2010s. Mourenza links the two moments through the figure of political cartoonist Andrés Rábago, known mostly through his pen name 'El Roto'. Employing a Gramscian framework, the author explores Rábago's function as a public intellectual and the complex dynamics of consensus and dissent that have characterised the democratic period. He also examines an important form of public pronouncement, that of the cartoon in print media, thus rounding out our understanding of the different media through which a public can be interpellated and have its opinions shaped or questioned.

The concluding chapters by Federico López-Terra and Georgina Blakeley, in turn, offer complementary evaluations of how the economic, social and political crisis that began in 2008 has affected the Spanish public sphere and has deepened our understanding of it. López-Terra delves into the notions of consensus and disruption through a semiotic analysis of the various notions of 'crisis' that are shaping Spanish public discourse. This case study thus allows us to see a twenty-first-century public sphere in action, with its aspect of self-reflexivity, its questions over qualitative – as opposed to purely formal – discursive freedom, and the clash between competing narratives that would shape the very understanding that citizens have of their place in society and their relationship to the public sphere. Blakeley, for her part, focuses on the 15-M or *indignados* movement and on the various issues involved in assessing its impact. She delves into the question of whether, as has sometimes been argued, the influence of the *indignados* has been circumscribed to public discussion and the media agenda, while remaining incapable of affecting real institutions and policies. This, in turn, addresses the issue of how the public sphere interacts with and affects politics in a twenty-first-century social and communicative context.

To bring this introduction to a close, a note of limitation is in order. It is unavoidable that any book that is ambitious in its scope will be culpable of glaring omissions. We accept that this is the case with this volume and hope that the reader will understand that including all angles related to the Spanish public sphere would have stretched this project to unwieldy limits. We hope that, for those topics that are either absent or dealt with insufficiently in the present volume, the curious reader will be able to find good leads in the thematically ordered 'Further Reading' section. And we can only hope that future projects and publications will address and develop both those angles that are fully engaged-with in the volume and those that only appear in the background. It could hardly be otherwise, given our aim of rendering visible the richness and complexity of the Spanish public sphere during the last three centuries.

**David Jiménez Torres** obtained his Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge and was Lecturer in Contemporary Spanish Cultural Studies at the University of Manchester. He is currently Profesor Asociado at the Universidad Camilo José Cela, Spain. His research interests include Spanish-English cultural transfers during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Spanish imaginaries of – and writings on – the First World War, and the idea of the intellectual in contemporary Spanish culture. He is the author of the monograph *Ramiro de Maeztu and England: Imaginaries, Realities and Repercussions of a Cultural Encounter* (Boydell & Brewer, 2016), as well as numerous articles in scholarly journals such as *Revista de Occidente*, the *Bulletin of Spanish Studies*, the *Hispanic Research Journal* and *Historia y Política*. He is also a columnist, essayist and novelist, his most recent work of fiction being *Cambridge en mitad de la noche* (Entre Ambos, 2018).

**Leticia Villamediana González** is Senior Teaching Fellow in Hispanic Studies at the University of Warwick. Previously she taught at Queen's University, Belfast, where she completed her Doctoral studies in 2013. Her research interests lie in the fields of eighteenth-century Spanish literature, culture and intellectual history, Anglo-Spanish cultural transfers and Spanish periodical press. Her monograph *Anglomanía: la imagen de Inglaterra en la prensa española del siglo XVIII* is forthcoming with Tamesis Books in 2019 and focuses on the study of *anglomania* and *anglophobia* in the Spanish press and their contribution to Spain's programme of Enlightenment reform. Her research has also appeared in academic journals such as *Cuadernos de Ilustración y Romanticismo* and *Dieciocho: Hispanic Enlightenment*, and she

contributes to the *Year's Work in Modern Language Studies*, reviewing the section on 'Spanish Studies: Literature, 1700–1823'.

## References

- Álvarez Junco, J. 2001. *Mater dolorosa: la idea de España en el siglo XIX*. Madrid: Taurus.
- Bolufer Peruga, M. 2006. 'Del salón a la asamblea: sociabilidad, espacio público y ámbito privado (siglos XVII–XVIII)', *Saitabi: revista de la Facultat de Geografia i Història* 56: 121–48.
- Calhoun, C. (ed.). 1993. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Cazorla Sánchez, A. 2013. 'Did You Hear the Sermon? Progressive Priests, Conservative Catholics, and the Return of Political and Cultural Diversity in Late Francoist Spain', *Journal of Modern History* 85(3): 528–57.
- Fernández, J.A. 2008. *El malestar en la cultura catalana: la cultura de la normalització, 1976–1999*. Barcelona: Empúries.
- Fraser, Nancy. 1992. 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, pp. 109–2.
- Juliá, S. 2004. *Historias de las dos Españas*. Madrid: Taurus.
- Landes, J. B. 1988. *Women in the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.
- Martí Monterde, A. 2013. 'Interliterariness and the Literary Field: Catalan Literature and Literatures in Catalonia', in J.R. Resina (ed.), *Iberian Modalities: A Relational Approach to the Study of Culture in the Iberian Peninsula*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, pp. 62–80.
- Ortega y Gasset, J. 1966. *Obras completas*, vol. 1. Madrid: Revista de Occidente.
- Puig, V. 2012. 'La cultura como parque temático', *El País*, 16 December.
- . 2014. 'Nota en los manuales de literatura', *El País*, 6 April.
- . 2015. 'La cultura es lo de menos', *El País*, 7 December.
- Radcliff, P. 2011. *Making Democratic Citizens in Spain: Civil Society and the Popular Origins of the Democratic Transition, 1960–1978*. Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan.
- Ruiz Torres, P. 2008. *Reformismo e Ilustración*. Barcelona: Crítica.
- Vila-Sanjuan, S. 2018. *Otra Cataluña: Seis siglos de cultura catalana en castellano*. Barcelona: Destino.