

CULTURAL HISTORY OF LITERATURE



# MODERN LITERATURES IN SPAIN

JO LABANYI · LUISA ELENA DELGADO

WITH HELENA BUFFERY, KIRSTY HOOPER & MARI JOSE OLAZIREGI



# CONTENTS

[Cover](#)

[Series Page](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[Introduction](#)

[1 Modernity and the Singular Nation \(1700-1840s\)](#)

[Reactive Modernity](#)

[Reasons of State](#)

[Public Spaces and the Location of Power](#)

[Cultural Identity and the Enlightenment Reform Project](#)

[Gender and the Productive Nation](#)

[The Myth of Two Spains](#)

[2 From Sensibility to Desire: The Construction of the Modern Subject \(1730s-1880s\)](#)

[Sensibility and Bourgeois Morality](#)

[The Romantic Self and the Emergence of the Woman Writer](#)

[The Consolidation of Sexual Difference](#)

[The Sexualization of Desire](#)

[3 The Rise of the Public Sphere and the Professionalization of the Writer \(1730s-1890s\)](#)

[The Enlightenment Man of Letters and Spaces of Sociability](#)

[The Regulation of Theater](#)

[Book Publishing and the Rise of an Independent Press](#)

The Original Author and the Creation of a Literary Market

Journalism and the Expansion of the Literary Reading Public

The Diversification of the Public Sphere

4 Countering Castilian: From Retrenchment to the Renaissance of Peripheral National Literatures (1710s-1890s)

Between Literary “Reconstruction” and Language Shift: Catalan in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries and Beyond

After the “Dark Centuries”: Re-emergence of the Galician Language

The First Modern Basque Period: Linguistic Revival

The Catalan Renaixença: From Provincial Revivalism to the Beginnings of Political Catalanism

A Nation Finds Its Voice: The Galician Rexurdimento

Euskal Pizkundea: The Basque Renaissance

5 The Uses of the Past: Writing the Nation (1760s-1890s)

Neoclassical Tragedy: The Past as National Allegory

The Romantic Interest in the Multicultural Past

From the Romantic Historical Novel to the Folletín

Catalan Historical Literature and Scholarship: Conflicting Nationalist Projects

Galician Historiography and Fiction: Constructing a Pre-Modern Past

Basque Literature: Myths of Origin

Narrating the Nineteenth Century: From Patriotism to Entertainment

## 6 Popular Culture: Exclusion and Appropriation (1760s-1930s)

The Construction of a Spanish Literary Canon

Popular Theater in the Eighteenth Century

Folk Culture

The Serialized Novel

The Commercialization of Theatrical Culture

Performing and Containing Catalan Popular Culture: Theater and the Satirical Press

Basque Popular Culture: Oral Literature and Theater

Popular Culture in Galicia: The Dilemmas of Diglossia

Kiosk Literature, Politics, and “Sicalipsis”

The Modernist Cooption of Popular and Mass Culture

## 7 Urban Modernity and the Provincial: Changing Concepts of Time and Space (1830s-1930s)

Constructing the Capital

The Madrid Avant-Garde: The Metropolis as the Shock of the New

Barcelona: Modernity and Cosmopolitanism

A Provincial Nation

The Critique of Rural Spain

Symbolist Poetics and the Catalan Landscape

## 8 The Nation Called into Question (1890s-1920s)

Turn-of-the-century Crisis

The Problem of Castile

An Idiosyncratic Critique of the Nation: The Case of Valle-Inclán

[Ortega y Gasset and the Revista de Occidente  
Galicia: Between Languages and Continents, a  
Nation Takes Shape](#)

[Euskal Herria: The Homeland of the Basques](#)

[In Search of a Cosmopolitan Nation: Catalan  
Nationalism and European Modernity](#)

## [9 Writers and Political Commitment \(1930s-1960s\)](#)

[Feminist Intellectuals](#)

[Taking Sides](#)

[The Cultural Program of the Second Republic](#)

[Falangist Intellectuals: From Victory to  
Disillusionment](#)

[The Emergence of a Literary Opposition](#)

[Catalan Writers and the Struggle for Cultural  
Survival](#)

[From Galeguismo to Galaxia: The Freezing and  
Thawing of Galician Literary Culture](#)

[Basque Culture: Resistance and the Fight for  
Modernity](#)

## [10 Spain beyond Spain: Exile and Diaspora \(1939- 1980s\)](#)

[The Aporetic Place of Exile](#)

[Haciendo Justicia \(Doing Justice\): Remembering  
and Recovering Exile through Spanish Republican  
Exile Historiography](#)

[Basque Diaspora and Exile: The Eighth Province](#)

[Galicia: Displacement and Deterritorialization](#)

[Catalan Literature in Exile/Exile Literature in  
Catalan](#)

[The Places and Temporalities of Exile](#)

11 Catalan, Galician, and Basque Literatures: Recovery and Institutionalization (1960s-1990s)

Imagining a Future for Catalan Culture: From Resistance to Normalization and Beyond

Literature in Galician: Politics, Peripheries, and Postmodernism

The Consolidation of the Basque Literary System

12 Rewriting Gender and Sexuality (1970s-2020)

Belated Recognition

Coming Out

Camping up the Transition

Cartographies of Desire: Rewriting Gender and Sexuality in Catalan

Girl (and Boy) Interrupted: The Fragmented Story of Galician Writing on Gender and Sexuality

Feminist and Gay Writing in Basque

Female Bodies in Transition: The Personal and the Political

Feminism Comes into View

Unseemly Bodies: Illness, Aging, Disability

13 Memory and Forgetting (1970s-2020)

Recovering Silenced Memories of the Francoist Repression

Remembering World War II and the Holocaust

Exposing the Underside of the “Development Years” and Transition to Democracy

Rewriting the Distant Past

Catalan Literature “in the Skin of the Other”: Other Histories, Other Voices, Other Bodies

Galician Memories: Local Histories, Global Stories

[Basque Memories: A Double Violence](#)

[14 Normalization, Crisis, and the Search for New Paradigms \(1975-2021\)](#)

[The Transition as Interpretative Matrix](#)

[The State of Culture](#)

[Intellectuals and the Renewal of the Essay](#)

[The Literature of Consensus: Private Conflicts and the Occlusion of the Social](#)

[The Shifting Scapes of Contemporary Catalan Writing](#)

[Change of Skin: The Basque Literature of Afterwards](#)

[Crisis and Its Counterpoints: Galician Analog and Digital Culture since 2008](#)

[Questioning Normalcy, Imagining Otherwise](#)

[References](#)

[Index](#)

[End User License Agreement](#)

## List of Illustration

Chapter 1

**Figure 1** [Europa Regina. Reproduced from the 1598 German edition of Sebastian Münster's Co...](#)

# Cultural History of Literature

Christopher Cannon, *Middle English Literature*

Sandra Clark, *Renaissance Drama*

Glenda Dicker/sun, *African American Theater*

Alison Finch, *French Literature*

Ann Hallamore Caesar and Michael Caesar, *Modern Italian Literature*

Jo Labanyi and Luisa Elena Delgado, *Modern Literatures in Spain*

Roger Luckhurst, *Science Fiction*

Michael Minden, *Modern German Literature*

Katie Normington, *Medieval English Drama*

Lynne Pearce, *Romance Writing*

Charles J. Rzepka, *Detective Fiction*

Jason Scott-Warren, *Early Modern English Literature*

Charlotte Sussman, *Eighteenth-Century English Literature*

Mary Trotter, *Modern Irish Theatre*

Andrew Baruch Wachtel and Ilya Vinitzky, *Russian Literature*

Andrew J. Webber, *The European Avant-Garde*

Tim Whitmarsh, *Ancient Greek Literature*

# **Modern Literatures in Spain**

JO LABANYI AND LUISA ELENA DELGADO  
with Helena Buffery, Kirsty Hooper, and Mari Jose Olaziregi

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First published in 2023 by Polity Press

Polity Press  
65 Bridge Street  
Cambridge CB2 1UR, UK

Polity Press  
111 River Street  
Hoboken, NJ 07030, USA

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ISBN-13: 978-1-5095-4583-4

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Control Number: 2022932840

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# Introduction

The title of our volume, *Modern Literatures in Spain*, recognizes Spain's particularity as a country that has developed literary markets in four languages: Castilian (whose rise to dominance as the language of state from the late fifteenth to early eighteenth centuries led to its becoming synonymous with Spanish), Catalan, Galician, and Basque (*euskara* in the Basque language). Our aim has been to offer a cultural history that is attentive to the way that "Spanish literature" has been constructed historically and came to refer solely to literature in Castilian. We have made a point of analyzing these four literatures relationally, avoiding the frequent tendency to treat them in separate chapters.

Throughout, we call into question geographic and linguistic definitions of the nation. Exile literature is explored in order to question the boundaries of the Spanish nation and its literary production; we consider exile writing in all four of Spain's literary languages. The discussion of literature in Basque covers the French as well as Spanish Basque country, since literary processes in the two territories have functioned as a continuum. The coverage of Catalan literature includes the Balearic Islands, Valencia, and the Catalan-speaking parts of Aragon. The sections on Galician literature in particular consider the fraught issue of authors from Spain's historic nationalities who write entirely or partly in Castilian. Foreign-born authors resident in Spain are mentioned at certain points, since the question of who counts as a Spanish (or Catalan or Galician or Basque) writer need not align with place of birth – or with mother tongue, for that matter.

The volume's timeline moves from the eighteenth century, in the course of which Castilian was imposed as the sole language of administration and education, to the present, with a solid publishing industry and literary output now established in Catalan, Galician, and Basque. While the minority languages still compete on an uneven playing field with Castilian, globalization has opened up opportunities for Spain's "minor" literatures. In the course of writing this book, we became increasingly aware that the timelines of the four literatures studied do not always coincide; for that reason, in certain chapters the temporal framing of the sections devoted to the various literatures differs. A major aim has been to rethink literary periodization: our chapters have a thematic focus, overlapping in their temporal coverage but gradually moving forward through time - in this way avoiding the impression that at a certain date one period ends and another starts. This has allowed us to take account of the multi-temporality of historical processes, with the coexistence at any one moment of what Raymond Williams identified as residual, dominant, and emergent tendencies (2009 [1977], 121-7). We have consequently been sensitive to the tensions and contradictions that give literary texts their dynamism and cultural relevance. The thematic focus of our chapters is organized in terms of forces of cultural change that leave their mark on, and are facilitated by, changes in literary form: we take seriously Williams's claim (2009 [1977], 128-35) that literary form does not simply mirror cultural processes but is a motor of change through its imaginative capacity to give expression to still inchoate social concerns.

There are several ways in which this cultural history of modern literatures in Spain differs from existing Spanish literary histories, in addition to its relational treatment of the country's four literatures. First, its discussion of literary movements emerges out of the exploration of

literature's ability to act as a barometer of cultural change, rather than being a primary organizing principle; this avoids a view of literary history as a closed system of intertextual literary influences. Second, we have questioned the principles that underlie histories of national literature by working against the notion of a literary canon comprised by texts that are deemed worthy to represent the national – a notion that has excluded authors from certain social categories, as well as privileging certain kinds of subject matter and style. The forging of Catalan, Galician, and Basque literary canons that has been necessary to give status to minority literatures has not been exempt from such exclusions. The conception of the canon as a corpus of works deemed worthy to represent the national has meant that literary histories have often included texts that were little read or performed. We have tried in our cultural history to give a sense of what the Spanish public actually read or viewed on stage; consequently, our volume approximates to a history of literary tastes. We thus pay considerable attention to popular literary forms, many of which – especially those associated with urban culture – have been dismissed as vulgar. We have also worked against a tendency to construct “Spanish literature” (seen in the singular) in a uniformly serious register, on the supposition that the serious is better suited to represent the national. This tendency has led to the exclusion from the canon of a great deal of literary works that are huge fun – and were enjoyed by a broad public for that reason.

In this respect, we have been mindful of Pierre Bourdieu's theorization of taste as a means of constructing class distinctions, and of the process whereby, in the course of the nineteenth century, literature established itself as a (supposedly) autonomous field by defining literary merit as the inverse of commercial gain (1996a [1979], 1996b

[1992]). In tracing the emergence in modern Spain of a public sphere, we have stressed the importance of journalism, not only for creating several modern literary genres but also for enabling the professionalization of the writer. We have sought to show how the literary field evolved in the course of the twentieth century with the requirement from the 1930s to the 1950s – on both sides of the Spanish Civil War – that writers commit to specific political options, and the impact since the return to democracy in 1975 of the consensus politics favored by the Spanish state and the increasing pressures of the neoliberal market, both challenged in recent years.

As should be clear from the above, we hope to have shown that, while the social and political attitudes taken by writers are hugely varied, literature is never truly autonomous; declarations of literary autonomy are themselves ideological statements. This is, therefore, a political as well as cultural history of literature, inasmuch as it situates literature in relation to political responses to, and proposals for, historical change, as well as in relation to changing social formations and experiences. In those social experiences we include the creation of new forms of subjectivity, where literature has played a vital role. A major factor here, considered throughout the volume, is the role played by literature in the construction – and critique – of gender roles. That involves much more than broadening the canon beyond the usual (heterosexual/homosocial) male suspects – though that is something we have also tried to do.

The book has been written by the two co-authors Jo Labanyi and Luisa Elena Delgado working together as a team with the three contributors: Helena Buffery for literature in Catalan, Kirsty Hooper for literature in Galician, and Mari Jose Olaziregi for literature in Basque. In some chapters, one of us has served as lead author, with

one or more co-writers contributing particular sections; in others, the division of labor has been more even. Most chapters cover more than one of Spain's four literatures, in various combinations as appropriate to the topic. [Chapters 1, 2, and 3](#) discuss literature in Castilian only. [Chapters 4 and 11](#) deal solely with literatures in Catalan, Galician, and Basque. Buffery was responsible for all the sections on literature in Catalan, as well as for writing the frame narrative for [chapter 11](#); she additionally wrote the sections on Spanish-language literature in [chapter 10](#), for which she was lead author, and played a major role through her attention to the relational dimension of issues discussed in different sections of the text. Hooper wrote all the sections on literature in Galician, as well as the frame narrative for [chapter 4](#). Olaziregi wrote all the sections on literature in Basque. The sections on literature in Castilian were shared by Delgado and Labanyi, co-writing [chapters 7 and 12](#), and with Delgado being lead author for [chapters 1 and 14](#), and Labanyi being lead author for [chapters 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 13](#). Although we have each taken responsibility for writing specific sections, the planning and rewriting of the book as a whole has been done by all of us working together, in order to produce what we hope is a coherent narrative.

We have provided English translations of quotations from Spanish, Catalan, Galician, and Basque, and of titles and organizations (where not self-evident) on first mention in each chapter. Dates of works are given on first mention in each chapter. The book's thematic organization means that many authors are discussed in more than one chapter; readers are encouraged to use the index to locate multiple mentions of particular authors. We have assumed that not all of our readers will have prior knowledge of the literatures of Spain or of Spanish history. Each chapter has a number of subheadings so as to focus discussion and

allow flexibility in the positioning of the sections on the four literatures concerned.

We are keenly aware of how much has had to be excluded from our narrative for reasons of space. We have tried to make the condensed overview critical rather than descriptive. In addition, for each chapter, we have singled out a number of texts – covering the various literatures discussed in that chapter – for more detailed textual analysis, offering readings that go beyond existing criticism. We thus hope that the volume will add to scholarly understanding of the four literatures of modern Spain not just through the range of material covered, but also by offering fresh interpretations of individual texts and writers.

This book has been long in the making. We thank our editors at Polity Books – Andrea Drugan at the start and Ellen MacDonald-Kramer, Stephanie Homer, and Mary Savigar at the end – for their patience. We also thank the Production Department at Polity Books for their inspired suggestion of a mosaic for the cover picture, not only because of its evocation of Gaudí's modernist reworking of the mosaic art form, but also because the concept of a mosaic – including the gaps between the pieces – perfectly represents our attempt in this volume to produce a narrative that foregrounds cultural heterogeneity. The five authors have learned much from each other in the course of writing this book, which could not have been written by any of us on our own. The collaborative conception of the volume has been essential to the relational approach to Spain's four literatures that characterizes its structure and scope. We hope that this collaborative conception of scholarship may serve as a step towards further discussion of the diverse cultures of Spain that is based on dialogue and cooperation, allowing a rich understanding of the complexities of the country's cultural plurality.

# 1

## Modernity and the Singular Nation (1700–1840s)

This first chapter covers the beginnings of debates around modernity in Spain in the early eighteenth century through to the Romantic period. Around 1580, German cartographer and cosmographer Sebastian Münster included in his popular work *Cosmographia universalis* a map created by Johannes Buciuis in 1537 (see [figure 1](#)). Known as *Europa Regina*, it represented a queen carrying the iconology of Europe, with different parts of the body corresponding to specific territories (Dainotto 2007, 30–3). The head of *Europa Regina* was Hispania, Germany represented the heart, and France the upper chest. Italy was Europe's right arm with Sicily the orb in its hand. England, Spain's political enemy, occupied a marginal position, symbolized by a flag firmly in the grasp of the monarch's left hand. The Habsburg Emperor Carlos V (Carlos I of Spain) must have been pleased with this visual commentary on his imperial affairs.

A hundred years later, a similar anthropomorphic map would have illustrated a very different political body, as the European territories under the control of the Spanish empire began to shrink and France started to consolidate its political and cultural hegemony. The gravity of the nation's predicament had been recognized by Spanish observers even before the Peace of Westphalia (1648) in which Spain lost northern Flanders. From the first half of

the seventeenth century, reformers known as *arbitristas* (from *arbitrio*, project) circulated countless proposals to improve the nation's economic situation, political cohesion, and moral character. The weaknesses threatening the stability of the vast Spanish empire's heterogeneous territories (encompassing the Americas, southern Italy and Milan, Flanders, the Philippines, and other smaller domains) were evident: a constantly bankrupt state that could not collect taxes or pay its army; conflicting internal trading policies; an unwieldy bureaucracy; unproductive lands controlled by the Church and an idle aristocracy; depopulation; massive inflation. The *arbitristas* offered a number of concrete solutions (protection of agriculture and industry; bringing water to arid areas; re-population of territories depopulated by wars; curbing of state spending; overhaul of the tax system) that were mostly ignored. The eighteenth-century *proyectistas* (reformers) recognized some of these *arbitrios* as valuable precedents to their own reformist ideas (Álvarez de Miranda 1985; Dubet and García Guerra 2009).



**Figure 1:** *Europa Regina*. Reproduced from the 1598 German edition of Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographia universalis*.

Source: Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

The perception of national decadence intensified with the outcome of the War of the Spanish Succession (1702–14), considered the first world war of modern times. The Habsburg Carlos II's death in 1700 without a direct heir produced a conflict between the French Bourbons' support for the future Felipe V, grandson of Louis XIV of France, and support for Archduke Charles of Austria by England, Holland, Prussia, and Austria, alarmed at the threat to the continental balance of power posed by possible union of the French and Spanish crowns. The war's conclusion marked a major re-drawing of the political boundaries of the Spanish empire. The Treaty of Utrecht (1713) allowed Felipe V to keep Spain's American possessions but forced him to renounce his rights to southern Flanders, Sardinia, Sicily, Naples, Milan, Menorca, and Gibraltar, most of which passed to the new emerging powers, England and Austria (Naples and Sicily would revert to Bourbon control in 1738). The war also marked a radical reconceptualization of the Spanish state, with the centralizing "Nueva Planta" (New Design) decrees of 1707–16, discussed below.

## **Reactive Modernity**

The political and cultural implications of such losses by a previously hegemonic power were remarked upon by European thinkers in a discourse that displaced Spain's political and cultural location towards Africa, away from rationality and modernity. Montesquieu wrote a scathing attack on Spanish culture in his *Persian Letters*, asserting that the nation should be under its European peers'

political supervision, thus assigning a colonial position to a nation that was (still) a colonial power (Dainotto 2007, 88). In response, eighteenth-century Spanish writers of different ideological tendencies like Father Benito Feijoo, José Cadalso, and Juan Pablo Forner wrote defensively about Spain's cultural worth, negating its symbolic "africanization" or, conversely, questioning the value of phenomena associated with modernity such as empiricism, scientific advances, secularism, and rationalism (Donato and López 2015). This kind of slanging match would become endemic to modern Spanish culture: the discussion of "Spanishness" in reactive mode, always in response to a northern European gaze (Torrecilla 1996, 11-54). The reactive mode would become increasingly emotional, whether belligerent or anguished, throughout the nineteenth century (Mariano José de Larra, Ricardo Macías Picavea, Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo, Rafael Altamira). It would peak with the thinkers writing around the time of the loss of Spain's last major colonies in 1898 (see [chapter 8](#)), captured in Miguel de Unamuno's famous statement "me duele España" (Spain hurts me), reprised and mocked by Francoist chauvinism (Franco 2005).

In practice, Spain was not the only country to be repositioned as Europe's exotic Other. As Roberto Dainotto (2007) has shown, in the eighteenth century the European south in general became Europe's internal Other, with Spain, Portugal, Italy, and Greece (not to mention outlying nations like Russia and Turkey) seen as "deficiencies of Europeanness," located within its past. Conversely, France and other northern European countries came to incarnate the present and future, modernity and progress in all their teleological certainty. Spain's ambivalent status as both an imperial and a declining power at this moment of modern European expansion presented its thinkers and public figures with an ineluctable choice: between progress

achieved through a modernity viewed as foreign, and authenticity derived from intolerant, archaic traditions. The choice was an impossible one, resulting in the “split consciousness” of so many nineteenth- and twentieth-century Spanish thinkers: torn between the promise of progress and cultural prestige tied to modernity’s Eurocentric master narrative and the realization that such a narrative assigned them, as members of a second-rank nation marked by its Semitic (particularly Arab) heritage, to the margins of history. This double-bind has been used to construct a tragic narrative of Spanishness, premised on the nation’s supposed “autophagous” tendencies (Ilie 1984) – a predicament shared with all those peripheries excluded from the modern European utopia which had to eliminate the elements in their respective cultures that constituted deviations from the modern cultural paradigm. The irony is that, in so doing, they were often accused of imitation and lack of originality (Torrecilla 1996; L.E. Delgado, Mendelson, and Vázquez 2007).

What was specific about Spain’s situation was its simultaneous position as an imperial power and a colonized country (Dussel 1995, 67; Mignolo 2012). During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Spain would be subject to the cultural, military, and economic imperialism of hegemonic Europe (in particular France, Holland, and England). At the same time, it was immersed in its own imperialist designs: not just in America, but also, still at this time, in South-East Asia (the Philippines) and the Pacific (Caroline Islands, Mariana Islands including Guam), all lost in 1898 (in the case of the Carolinas and the Marianas excepting Guam, sold to Germany), and in Europe (Naples and Sicily would remain under the control of a branch of the Spanish Bourbons until 1860). Spain’s complex position is well illustrated by a famous quote from the *novator* (literally, innovator) Juan de Cabriada. The

*novatores* were scientists and thinkers who, between 1675 and 1725, challenged traditional Spanish scholastic thinking and created networks of knowledge and sociability – often meeting in private *tertulias* (salons) and learned academies – in support of empiricism, secularism, and the free circulation of modern European philosophical and scientific thought (Pérez Magallón 2002). In his *Carta filosófica médicoquímica* (*Medical-Chemical Philosophical Letter*, 1687), Cabriada lamented: “Que es lastimoso y aun vergonzosa cosa que, como si fuéramos indios, hayamos de ser los últimos en recibir las noticias y luces públicas que ya están esparcidas por Europa” (“It is pitiful, even shameful, that we should be the last to receive news and public enlightenment already disseminated throughout Europe, as if we were Amerindians”) (Sánchez Ron 2016). A mid-eighteenth-century list of Catalan grievances presented to the Spanish Crown denounced priests who only spoke Castilian with a similar argument: “¿Y van a ser los labradores catalanes y valencianos de peor condición que los indios?” (“And are Catalan and Valencian laborers to be seen as inferior to Amerindians?”) (*Memorial de Greuges* 1760), the point being that Spanish missionaries often learned Amerindian languages to facilitate the conversion process, but Catalan and Valencian laborers were expected to communicate in Castilian, a language they often did not know. These two examples show the coexistence of a defense of European minority languages with an unquestioned assumption of imperialist hierarchies, thus illustrating the intersection of modernity and coloniality.

The shift in the perception of Spanishness that took place in the eighteenth century and Romantic period can be summed up by the question: Against whom is Spanishness defined? The answer foregrounds opposition to the foreign; specifically, the French. In the eighteenth century,

throughout Europe, refinement and high culture were equated with French “civilization.” For Spain, which had maintained its political hegemony by fighting against France for two centuries, the change of dynasty from the Habsburgs to the Bourbons had far-reaching consequences for the country’s cultural self-perception. The identification of modernity, high culture, and scientific innovation with France explains why it was at this time that reactionary sectors started to monopolize the meaning of “lo español” (Spanishness). The desire to draw the boundaries of a distinct Spanish identity also led, during the second part of the eighteenth century, to the specifically Spanish cultural phenomenon of *majismo*. A *majo/a* was a well-dressed, outspoken man or woman of the working classes, particularly of Madrid (a similar term was *manolo/a*). *Majismo* refers to the appropriation by the aristocracy (particularly by women, with important ramifications for the intersection of gender and national character) of popular customs seen as manifestations of an essential national spirit (Haidt 2011; Zanardi 2016). That appropriation included dress, dance, and even linguistic usage and body language. *Majos/as* and *manolos/as* are represented in Goya’s early paintings and tapestry cartoons and in the most popular plays of the century, Ramón de la Cruz’s *sainetes* (one-act farces with song and dance; see [chapter 6](#)).

The literary battles fought in the eighteenth century are a consequence of Spanish reactions to French cultural hegemony. The positions in the dispute range from full acceptance of this hegemony to a defensive rejection of any tendency perceived as foreign. Around 1735, new customs imposed by the government and public officials, many of them French and Italian, came to be seen as incompatible with an essential Spanishness expressed by the term *castizo*. In Spain, *castizo* meant of good lineage; that is,

unadulterated by foreign (including Jewish or Muslim) elements. The term also underpinned attempts to classify degrees of racial mixture in Spanish America and the Philippines (Carrera 2003). By extension, the term referred to what was typical of a certain region or of the nation. What was *castizo* was incompatible not only with the foreign but also with the country's non-Castilian speaking regions, unless they were assimilated into a national melting-pot, the capital Madrid being the indispensable instrument of this process. Regional specificities were viewed as local expressions of a larger whole to which they should be subordinated. From the eighteenth century on, the *castizo* came to be assigned in the Spanish national imaginary to Castile and/or Andalusia. The debate over which elements of Spanish culture were or were not *castizo* would continue through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with the term mobilized by Spanish conservative nationalism.

## **Reasons of State**

Domestically, the end of the War of the Spanish Succession marked the beginning of a new political era, characterized by strongly centralized government and the aspiration to create an equally centralized national culture: a process that would continue throughout the nineteenth century. With the proclamation of the Nueva Planta decrees (Valencia, 1707; Majorca and Ibiza 1715; Catalonia 1716), the new Bourbon king Felipe V revoked the traditional institutions and charters (*fueros*) of the Catalan-speaking territories that had opposed him, ending Spain's division into the separate Crowns of Aragon and Castile. Navarre and the Basque provinces, which had supported him, kept their charters. Contrary to the fragmented character of Habsburg rule, the Nueva Planta state required the unity of

all its parts, subject to a single administration. All the king's subjects would therefore be bound by Castilian law and customs; internal borders were erased, which meant, among other things, the end of the Cadiz monopoly on trade with America and beginning of Catalonia's economic expansion into colonial markets, with long-term social and economic consequences. The new political order was sustained by the creation of Spain's first permanent army and a new administrative organization that reduced or suppressed the multiple existing territorial *consejos* (councils) - of Aragón, Navarre, Italy, the Indies - while the power of the Council of Castile was increased. The territories in the Americas were subjected to parallel measures of centralization and control, which remained largely theoretical since local authorities often determined what could or could not be enforced (Guimerá Ravina 2007; Paquette 2008). Recent consideration of the Spanish and Spanish-American Enlightenment from an Atlantic perspective has challenged the premise of the movement's European uniqueness, focusing on autochthonous processes that facilitated cultural interaction and the co-production of ideas and knowledge (Cañizares-Esguerra 2001; Conrad 2012; Hill 2018; Lewis, Bolufer Peruga, and Jaffe 2020; Stolley 2020).

Felipe V's punitive centralizing measures against supporters of his Habsburg rival in the War of the Spanish Succession also extended to cultural matters, as the new king determined to make Castilian the official language of his newly designed state. Use of the Catalan language was first restricted in public areas and later eliminated from primary and secondary education, a decision that would have long-lasting consequences for Catalan culture as well as for the relationship between the Catalan territories and the state. Already in 1715, a prosecutor in the Council of Castile called for restraint in the application of the new

language laws, warning that they would make Catalans of all political tendencies feel resentful (Anguera 2003, 78). The Bourbon monarchy's interest in the Castilian language was ironic, since the language of the court during the first half of the century was French and, in the second half, Italian. Ignacio de Luzán, whose *Poética* (1737; most-cited edition 1789) is considered the best Spanish expression of neoclassical aesthetics, wrote in both Italian and Spanish. The emphasis on a monolingual state, perceived as crucial for a unified citizenship, was consistent with the Enlightenment's belief in fixed universal cultural hierarchies and consequent disregard for (and fear of) difference. The new type of subject envisioned by the Bourbon dynasty was to be positioned in relation to a center from which "reasons of state" were articulated, imposed, and internalized (Medina 2009, 2013). In both politics and cultural matters, Bourbon Spain was characterized by the attempt to erase internal differences, particularly those that did not fit the imagined community of Enlightened subjects, including the poor, beggars, and vagrants. The Roma community (particularly those with a nomadic lifestyle) was subjected to increasingly repressive legislation, culminating in the 1749 order for the detention of all its members, rescinded in 1765. A 1783 royal decree granted citizenship to the Roma with the aim of achieving their full cultural assimilation, forbidding their language and traditions (Pym 2007).

Thus, it was in the eighteenth century that a particular political and cultural narrative was born: a narrative of Spanish identity whose starting point was the identification between nation and state, and the consideration of that state as politically and culturally homogeneous and centered in Castile (Albareda i Salvadó 2002). The top-down, coordinated effort to define Spanishness constituted an identity project whose far-reaching implications would

surpass the economic and social projects undertaken in the century's course. The shadow that this identity project would cast on the construction of the Spanish literary canon would be very long indeed: not until the late twentieth century (1995) would a writer be awarded the Premio Nacional de las Letras (National Literature Prize) for a work in a language other than Castilian: the novel *Dins el darrer blau* (*Into the Last Blue*), written in Catalan by the Majorcan writer Carme Riera. Only in 2019 would the Premio Cervantes be awarded to a writer with a significant body of work in a language other than Castilian (the poet Joan Margarit, who switched to writing in Catalan in 1981, after early work in Castilian).

## **Public Spaces and the Location of Power**

Part and parcel of that new narrative of unified Spanishness was the creation of physical and symbolic public national spaces. "National" meant "royal," given the absolutist equation of nation-state and crown. It was at this time that the various royal academies were founded under crown patronage (see [chapter 3](#)). Among the first collections of the Royal Library, created in 1712, were books seized from aristocrats who had supported the Habsburg side in the War of the Spanish Succession. The institution would officially become a "national library" (rather than crown property) in 1836. Academies of Letters were founded in Barcelona (1751) and Seville (1752). The Archives of the Council of the Indies (now Archivo General de Indias) were established, also in Seville, in 1785. The new dynasty additionally embarked on a process of urban modernization, particularly in Madrid, in consonance with Enlightenment ideals of the common good, social order, and sociability. This project included well-lit streets,

gardens, and coffee houses (Outram 2019, 10–25). It also included new roads and infrastructure to facilitate the exchange of people and goods between the nation's symbolic center (Madrid) and the provinces, as well as between peninsular Spain and the rest of its territories. Emblematic of the new Bourbon state model is the number of royal residences, tripling those of the Habsburgs: a building boom that culminated in the construction of the vast Royal Palace in Madrid, built on the ruins of the old Alcázar after a fire destroyed it in 1734. The new Versailles-inspired building, designed mostly by Italian architects and decorated by the best artists in Europe, became a symbol of the new Bourbon dynasty and the new state (Medina 2009, 39–46). However, Felipe V would never inhabit it; the French-born monarch responsible for Spain's centralization and official monolingualism never fully adapted to life in the capital and never spoke Spanish fluently.

Despite its efforts, the Spanish state – unlike the French – was not able to shape “citizens” loyal to a common national cause in the eighteenth century or later. One reason is that in Spain, unlike France, a bourgeois public sphere independent of government and its institutions did not exist (García Díaz 2019; Kitts 2019). For the most part Spanish elites, including the aristocracy and the Church, would oppose progressive ideas as antithetical to a true national essence.

For all the state efforts to impose Madrid as cultural center of the newly designed state, the reality was that new economic, political, and cultural ideas often came from the provinces and the colonies, even if official recognition had to come from the political center. The first of the many economic societies created to promote Spain's development was the Real Sociedad Vascongada de Amigos del País (Basque Royal Society of Friends of the Nation), founded in 1765; Madrid's equivalent would be created ten years later,

followed by many others in the Peninsula and other territories of the Spanish Crown. Indeed, the very notion of a Republic of Letters, a universal and timeless intellectual community from whose center (hegemonic Europe and in particular France) knowledge would circulate to the world, was challenged from the peripheries (Álvarez Barrientos 2003). Father Juan Andrés y Morell, a Valencian Jesuit who settled in Mantua (Italy) after the Jesuits were expelled from Spain in 1767, composed in Italian what is considered the first history of world and comparative literature (*On the Origins, Progress and Present State of All Literatures*, 1782–99). Andrés’s work challenged the existence of universal good taste and insisted on the importance of historicizing local phenomena. His monumental work developed a comparatist approach that theorized a different Europe and a different modernity: a Europe seen from the south whose origins are found in Sicily and Al-Andalus; that is to say, in the Orient (Dainotto 2007, 105–33). The tensions between state and “regional” identities were seen as a danger to the unified nation even by “liberal” Enlightenment writers like Feijoo, whose essay “Amor de la patria y pasión nacional” (Love of the Fatherland and National Passion, 1729) would warn against the perils of split loyalties or national allegiances considered incompatible with true patriotism, by now firmly identified with a state that was to be the sole guarantor of its citizens’ interests and happiness (Valero 2002).

## **Cultural Identity and the Enlightenment Reform Project**

In the Enlightenment, literature (meaning “letters” in the broad sense) was understood as a tool of communication and education in service of the common good; hence the