



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF HUMAN-SOCIAL SCIENCE: D
HISTORY, ARCHAEOLOGY & ANTHROPOLOGY
Volume 14 Issue 5 Version 1.0 Year 2014
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals Inc. (USA)
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Woman, Freemason and Spanish: Freemasonry and the Origins of Feminism

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GJHSS-D Classification : FOR Code: 220306



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



Woman, Freemason and Spanish: Freemasonry and the Origins of Feminism

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Resumen- Este trabajo estudia el papel de la mujer en la Masonería española, especialmente durante el siglo XIX. Se menciona el papel asignado a la mujer en las Constituciones de Anderson (1723), se citan los orígenes de la Masonería de Adopción y, a continuación, se analiza el papel asignado a la mujer en la Masonería, analizando principalmente el caso de España, donde las mujeres integradas en la Masonería fueron también, en muchos casos, las que sentaron las bases del Feminismo español.

Palabras clave: *masonería, historia de la mujer, feminismo español, siglo xix.*

I. INTRODUCTION

As an institution, the Spanish Freemasonry has only played a subsidiary role, though not negligible, in the contemporary history of Spain. Contrary to traditional apologists or detractors, current historiography has shown that Spanish lodges were active centres of democratic sociability and put a laudable effort in the modernisation of the country. Even at certain times of political and social crisis, when antidynastic parties had nothing to do with the game of power, they provided a platform of convergence to various democratic elements.

But its real strength was far from what certain historians, linked to the conspiracy theories, have defended and continue to defend, and its contribution to social and political progress was much smaller than what, in the opposite ideological pole, militant pro-Freemasonic literature maintains. In addition to its subsidiary condition, over much of our contemporary history, Freemasonic lodges must have worked in clandestine or semi-clandestine conditions; and, as a result of the secret of belonging, they also suffered a kind of generalised social suspicion.

Within this marginal institution, women generally had found themselves in evident numerical and legal

inferiority. Therefore, it can be argued without reservations that they were a marginalised minority in a marginal group in itself.

In this essay we will try to design the historical situation of the female Freemasonic group through the last third of the nineteenth century, which corresponds to the period of birth of the feminist issue within metropolitan Spanish lodges. Previously, due to the more or less widespread lack of knowledge about the nature and purposes of Freemasonic organisations, we consider that it is indispensable to refer to some essential Freemasonic documents relating to the issue and to link the situation in Spain with the context of international female Freemasonry.

II. WOMAN IN ANDERSON'S CONSTITUTIONS

As it is well known, contemporary Freemasonry, called Speculative in order to differentiate it from the medieval or Operative Freemasonry, was formed in 1717 and its Magna Carta, known as Anderson's Constitutions, was promulgated in 1723. This essential document would become a required reference for most Freemasons in the world, although its immediate reception had variable success in different countries and, in this sense, some of its main points were interpreted differently by the various Freemasonic organisations, especially with the passage of time.

Anderson's Constitutions, in short, defined Freemasonry as an institution created to unite men above the differences that separated them. Therefore they strictly forbade discussing about politics and religion in the lodges. With regard to its unifying intentions, in different articles the Universalist vocation of speculative Freemasonry was also emphasised. Lodges had to become a kind of laboratories in which the political, religious and cultural differences would be overcome. Nevertheless, Anderson's Constitutions indicated two cases which drastically limited Freemasonic universalism: article III stated the express prohibition of the admission of women and slaves as members of a lodge:

The persons admitted members of a lodge must be good and true, free born, and of mature and discreet age, no bondsmen, no women, no immoral or scandalous men, but of good report (Anderson, 1973: 51).

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Based on these transcendent Constitutions and on other important documents, such as a famous Discourse by Chevalier Ramsay in 1736 (Raschke, 2008: 21-22, 26; Chevallier, 1994: 88, 108, 216, 220), over the first half of the eighteenth century Freemasons excluded half of humankind from the works in the lodges by a triple argument: Operative tradition (medieval) had been exclusively male; woman was not socially free, and female nature was unable to preserve the mysteries and the secret. In addition to these reasons, the prohibition was also justified on the grounds that woman would disturb the quietness of the brethren in the lodge and ultimately would destroy the institution.

A little poem ("Les Franc-maçon, songe"), published in 1737 in *Nouvelle Apologie des Franc-maçons*, expressed such preventions (Chevallier, 1994: 150-151; Guigue, 2014),

Si le sexe est banni, qu'il n'en ait point d'alarmes,
Ce n'est point un outrage à sa fidélité;
Mais on craint que l'amour entrant avec ses charmes
Ne produise l'oubli de la fraternité.
Noms de frère et d'ami seraient de faibles armes,
Pour garantir les cœurs de la rivalité.

[If the fair sex is banished, do not be alarmed by this,
It is not an offense to their loyalty;
But I fear that Love, entering with her charms,
Produce oblivion of the fraternity.
The name brother and friend would be fragile arms
To protect the hearts from rivalry].

Having said that, the exclusive masculinity of the Operative (medieval) tradition of Freemasonry is not true, since the presence of woman has been documented in medieval corporations of builders in Paris [1292], Chester [1327], York [1350], Norwich [1375] or Würzburg [1428-1524]; and it is well known the case of Sabine Steinbach, daughter of the foreman of the Strasbourg Cathedral, and sculptor in Strasbourg and Marburg (Ligou, 1991: 454; Saunier, 2000: 294).

III. ADOPTIVE FREEMASONRY

Despite the opposition from the Anglo-Saxon Freemasonry tendency, women in France began to join the Order in the second half of the Age of Enlightenment. Formally, as pointed out by Yves Hibert Messeca, tangible evidence of feminine presence in Freemasonic lodges emerge around 1747-1749, and in the decades of 1770 and 1780 half a hundred towns had more or less constantly female lodges (Saunier, 2000: 8). Their works consisted mainly in ceremonies of reception, ceremonies of passing and raising into degrees, and in charitable activities. As Delsemme has emphasised:

Les loges d'adoption qui fleurirent au XVIII^e siècle relèvent totalement des loges masculines sur lesquelles elles étaient souches. Les Pays-Bas

autrichiens en comptèrent huit ou neuf; comme en France, elles étaient fréquentées surtout par des dames de la haute noblesse. Cette Maçonnerie d'adoption, qui ne survécut guère à l'Ancien Régime, n'atténuait qu'en apparence l'exclusion des femmes, l'un des principes fondamentaux des Constitutions d'Anderson et une règle qu'il fut interdit très longtemps de transgresser sous peine "d'irrégularité" (Delsemme, 2004: 52).

In the General Assembly of 10th June 1774, the Grand Orient de France [Grand Orient of France] decided to regularise these lodges and provide them with statutes. For this purpose, one year later it created the Rite de la Franc-maçonnerie d'Adoption ou Franc-maçonnerie des Dames [Rite of the Adoptive Freemasonry or Freemasonry of Ladies], which was under its jurisdiction. It established rules and laws for their government; it prescribed that only Master Freemasons could attend their meetings; that each Lodge of Adoption were under the responsibility and under the sanction and guarantee of a regularly constituted male lodge; that they should be chaired by the vénérable Maître [venerable Master] from the mother lodge, and accompanied by the Master Chairwoman. According to these same sources, the Franc-maçonnerie d'adoption [Adoptive Freemasonry] built on the degrees of Entered Apprentice, Fellow Craft, Master Mason and Perfect Master, is based on the development of Virtue. Jean-Marie Ragon [1781-1862] dedicated to it one of his rituals (Ragon, 1860).

The most relevant lodge of adoption was La Candeur of Paris. It was composed, among other celebrities, of Helvetius's wife, the Princess of Lamballe or the Duchesse of Chartres, wife of the future King of France, Philippe Egalité. By analysing the boards of members of the lodges of adoption, Daniel Ligou had suggested, as Gaspard emphasises, that their birth was due to the difficulty of excluding certain aristocratic women from the Freemasonic life (Gaspard, 1991: 97). This observation confirms the conviction of those who believe that the measure to prohibit women from participating in the works of the lodge was not of personal but of social nature. Faucher & Ricker had pointed out on this matter:

Les dames de la Cour fréquentent assidument les Loges d'Adoption et il semble que le Roi s'en offusque. Le jour même où le Grand Maître rend visite à La Candeur en compagnie de la duchesse de Chartres, de la duchesse de Bourbon et de la princesse de Lamballe, le lieutenant de police Le Noir convoque le Frère des Ormes, Vénérable de la Loge Thalie, et lui signifie un ordre du comte de Maurepas qui, au nom du Roi, interdit la tenue d'une Loge d'Adoption (Faucher & Ricker, 1967: 143).

The lodges of adoption, totally unknown in the British and Scandinavian Freemasonry, were introduced throughout continental Europe, especially in Italy, the

Netherlands, in Rhenish Germany, Austria, Poland and Russia. In France this type of adoption lasted until 1870, precisely the time when female Freemasonry began to develop in Spain.

IV. SPANISH FREEMASONRY DURING THE LAST THIRD OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

Encouraged by the liberties proclaimed in the Revolution of 1868, the Spanish Freemasonry initiated a unique takeoff in its history. It already existed before the Glorious Revolution but it bore a pitiful clandestine life and had never had the attendance of women. With Alfonso XII its process of growth did not diminish but, on the contrary, initiations multiplied and during the first stage of the Restoration the Great Architect Order reached its zenith on Spanish soil. This was helped by the spirit of tolerance of the Constitution of 1876 and by the Associations Act of 1887; under this Act different Freemasonic organisations were legalised for the first time in Spain.

Freemasonry quickly showed a truly complex image. Different interpretations of the landmarks, variable internal forms of distribution of power, influence of political ideologies or of new spiritualisms (theosophy, Spiritism, etc.), links to the Freethought movement, divisions caused by personal desires for prominence and other causes of different types originated a real maze of Grand Lodges or Freemasonic branches. These branches were nearly always confronted each other, which actually formed different Freemasonries. During the Democratic Sexenio (1868-1874) the following Grand Lodges stood out: the Gran Oriente Lusitano Unido (GOLU) [Lusitanian United Grand Orient], which sponsored a good number of lodges in the Iberian peninsula and the Canary Islands; the Gran Oriente Nacional de España (GONE) [National Grand Orient of Spain], of liberal-moderate character and encouraged for years by the writer Eduardo Caballero de Puga; and the progressive Gran Oriente de España (GODE) [Grand Orient of Spain], whose presidency would be occupied, among others, by renowned politicians such as Manuel Ruiz Zorrilla, Antonio Romero Ortiz, Manuel Becerra or Práxedes Sagasta (Alvarez-Lázaro, 2012: 127-187).

The Freemasonic network became especially dense during the Restoration (1875-1896). Among the nearly thirty Grand Lodges that were active at some point in this historical period, it should be added to the three ones just mentioned some other Grand Lodges which also brought important contingents of brethren together: the Gran Oriente Ibérico (GOIco) [Iberian Grand Orient], Gran Consejo General Ibérico of the Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis-Misraïm (GCGI) [Iberian General Grand Council], and the transcendental Gran Oriente Español (GOE) [Spanish Grand Orient], born in 1889 by the determined management of Miguel

Morayta, charismatic professor of the Central University [the actual Complutense University of Madrid]. Moreover, decentralization and symbolist trends vigorously appeared with the creation of the independent Grandes Logias Simbólicas [Symbolic Grand Lodges], movement initiated in 1878 by the Confederación Masónica del Congreso de Sevilla (CMCS) [Freemasonic Confederation of the Congress of Seville] and whose highest expression was the Gran Logia Simbólica Regional Catalana (GLSRC) [Regional Catalanian Symbolic Grand Lodge], led by the untarnished Catalan nationalist Rosendo Arús Arderiu (Álvarez-Lázaro, 2002a: 137-156; Álvarez-Lázaro, 2006: 293-296).

This range of Freemasonic powers spread out with unequal success around the 1200 symbolic lodges, which came to recruit about 50,000 brothers and more than fifty sisters; their geographical distribution was also irregular. The highest percentages of lodges and triangles corresponded to the provinces of Cádiz [122], Madrid [90], Barcelona [77], Málaga [60], Seville [59] and Murcia [50]. And successively, Madrid, Murcia, Andalusia, the Balearic Islands, Valencia and Catalonia were the autonomous communities which occupied the first places of Freemasonic density. Therefore, Freemasonry was mainly developed in the peripheral and insular Spain, with the logic exception of Madrid.

But the Spanish Freemasonic world of the last third of the nineteenth century not only showed its complexity in the statistical and administrative level, but also in the intellectual and ideological level. The influence of Krausism, positivism or Darwinism on Spanish Freemasons is evident; and the influence of eclecticism and Bakunin is also proved. Politically, the origins of the affiliates were varied, ranging between the dynastic right and the libertarian movement. However, since the eighties there was a turning point and the balance clearly tipped in favour of the diverse and varied sectors of the typical Spanish republicanism, which was dispersed and fragmented.

V. WOMAN SEEN BY THE SPANISH FREEMASONRY

In the symbolic lodges the most varied topics were dealt with; the debates about religion, politics, teaching and the working world stood out because of their number and vigour. The approaches mainly rested on reformist proposals, although sometimes it was found a strong counterpoint in the postulates defended by socialist and anarchist affiliates.

Among the many different topics discussed, the Hijos de la Viuda [Sons of the Widow] were greatly interested in the issue of woman. Not for nothing Manuel Becerra, the known Galician statistician, highlighted the importance of the "beautiful half of the humankind" in his investiture speech as Grand Master of the Gran

Oriente de España [Grand Orient of Spain]. F. del Pino attracted attention to this speech in an article that, under the title of "Gran Logia Simbólica. 21 de julio de 1884" ["Symbolic Grand Lodge. 21th July 1884"], was published in the *Boletín Oficial y Revista Masónica del Grande Oriente de España* [Official Bulletin and Freemasonic Journal of the Grand Orient of Spain] (Madrid, 15th and 30th July 1884: 207). Among the many existing evidence on this subject it should be emphasised that of Eligio Callejas who, in 1884, declared in the lodge Amor [Love] of Madrid:

Among the important issues that are today brought to the attention of man, none of them, perhaps, occupies such a preferential place as the issues closely connected with woman, under the aspect that considers her the modern anthropology and whom is claimed by any reckoning by the sociological sciences (Álvarez-Lázaro, 2006: 296-297).

There were lodges that, exalting the figure of the liberal woman, celebrated evening events in honour of Mariana Pineda, whereas other lodges organised important meetings and public events in favour of Republican heroines. This persistent concern about dignifying the image of woman, so common among liberal and progressive sectors of the time, allows us to talk, if not about a Freemasonic feminist movement in the strict sense, at least about a consistent feminist sensibility in a good number of lodges. Reflections of male and female Freemasons were due to two interrelated concerns: the dignity of women and their relation with the Freemasonic fraternity.

Freemasonic discourse was adapted to the different patterns of the profane discourse, already well known by the current historiography, although it had the particularity of being addressed to the affiliates themselves. A minority of brethren, difficult to quantify, held intransigent and reactionary positions. Opinions of this type were expressed in both internal debates and in Freemasonic press, such as the following which, under the initials F.P. and the title of "La mujer en la masonería" ["Woman in Freemasonry"], was published in *La Concordia* [The Concord] of Barcelona in November 1888:

I declare that I am an enemy to women as part of our Lodges, because I understand that the philosophic, social and economic discussions that may arise are not characteristic of their temperament or their body; nor do I think that they should find out about certain small incidents which unfortunately are promoted in our midst; before the woman we must always look great, let us conceal our misery among us.

However, Freemasons generally reclaimed the condition of women and shared the same starting point: historically woman had been unfairly subjugated and, in order to dignify her, they should provide her with an

adequate instruction, which naturally included the education imparted in the lodges. Everyone agreed that learned women should play a decisive role in the progress of humankind, but they disagreed with each other about where and how to do it.

The most numerous of these Freemasons who formed part of what, in another context, the teacher Capel-Martínez (1986: 140) has called a possibilistic orientation, felt that the reasons for social discrimination did not emanate from the feminine nature, but they reduced the activity of women almost exclusively to the family sphere and just demanded for her an elementary level of education.

A Freemason who signed with the symbolic name of "Pompey", and who belonged to a lodge of Cartagena, published in the *Boletín y Revista Masónica del Grande Oriente de España* [Bulletin and Freemasonic Journal of the Grand Orient of Spain] (15th July 1882: 217-221) an essay which, under the title of "Influencia de la mujer en la Masonería" ["Influence of Woman in Freemasonry"], is a good example of this approach since it commented clearly on what many others thought or wrote with ambiguity. Thus, he believed that to participate in public life was not a matter for women:

Not because of temperament, education or culture matters; [...] not because of essential differences in the structure of the physical body or of the thinking faculty; not because of the more or less relative atrophy of discernment, nor because of enervation or variants of forms in the cerebral convolutions; not, anyway, because of any psychological or physical phenomenon of disparity, but because of the diversity of destiny that they are called to fulfil.

In the same vein, the Freemason from Alicante Mercedes Vargas-Chambó who, under the pseudonym of Joan of Arc collaborated regularly in the newspaper *La Humanidad* [Humankind], bulletin of the lodge Constante Alona, suggested in an article entitled "Influencia de la mujer en la familia" ["Influence of Woman in the Family"] (20th May 1883: 106),

The education of the woman must be based on the soundest moral; all the knowledge that she has to acquire must be directed to make her into a faithful wife and a good mother. As we see it, it is not the most convenient to dedicate her to certain scientific careers that she does not need at all. If the woman is dedicated to pharmacy, medicine, the forum, who will look after her children? Who will represent as a good mother God's providence on earth?

Such intermediate stances, of essentially paternalistic roots and evidently contradictory, obeyed the common stereotype of the time rightly described by M. Nash:

Reason, logic, reflection and intellectual ability would predominate in men, whereas feelings,

affection, sensitivity, sweetness, intuition, passivity and abnegation predominate in women. Thus, the characteristics attributed to woman make her to be considered as a more suitable person to deal with the private sphere, and man with the public sphere of politics and work (Nash, 1983: 16).

In conclusion, and despite their differences with the dominant mentality of the time in Spain, several Freemasonic sectors trapped by the force of the received education and the prevailing mentality, in practice still considered women as second-order citizens. Their fundamental duties, they said, were pleasing their husbands and raise their children in progressive values; "to breastfeed the democratic milk", as would say ironically a French publicist. Their public intervention was restricted to the field of philanthropy and charity (Álvarez-Lázaro, 2002a: 137-156; Álvarez-Lázaro, 2009: 79).

With clearly different approaches from those of the possibilists, a more critical minority defended the indiscriminate comparison of sexes in political and labour issues. These stalwart defenders of women's claims, including a distinguished group of female Freemasons, claimed in their lodges and publications the same rights for women as those which the male world enjoyed. From the outset, they believed that the legal status of women was immoral, as the brother "Victor Hugo" lamented in a work he read in 1893 in the lodge Valencia número 119 [Valencia No. 119] of the capital of the Turia. In this work he criticised the Civil Code in use at that time, and demanded for women the cultural, social and political rights that were denied for them.

The mark intended to tell the history of "the different historical phases that the woman has passed since the family was established", and he defended the "need for granting them the full enjoyment of their moral, political and social rights in perfect equality with those that men enjoyed". The work was published in the *Boletín Oficial del Gran Oriente Español* [Official Bulletin of the Spanish Grand Orient] on 15th February 1893, and was also published in the local newspaper *El Alicantino Masón* [The Freemason of Alicante] on 30th April of that same year. It can be gleaned speeches and texts of this same kind, between 1872 and 1892, from newspapers and bulletins of Madrid, Barcelona and Alicante, just to mention a few representative examples.

Another female Freemason, who also used the symbolic name of "Joan of Arc", echoed in an article published on 28th April 1893 (Álvarez-Lázaro, 2009: 79-80) the American suffragist campaigns and Madame Clara's doctorate in Medicine in Paris, and expressed a defiant assertion:

[We must] condemn those who still preserve the traditional and erroneous opposition to the education of woman, because they assume that her intellectual development is injurious, and beyond the

domestic household we are not granted more than the essential knowledge to devote ourselves to the works they say we are entrusted to.

It is time that men stop harbouring these immature fears, that grant us our rights [and that] they do not think that being erudite we will disturb society. Unbeliever men, it is necessary to exchange the rifle for the vote.

However, these lecturers, who used to be active in the radical republicanism, were still more interested in linking women to the Freethought and laicism cause rather than in truly integrate them into the labour and political world. In their opinion, any solution to the female question necessarily meant to keep women away from Catholicism, infidel on their path to the doctrines of Christ, and especially from the Jesuits who had established unnatural and selfish moral categories.

Among the Freemasons who demanded feminism in the lodges, some very representative individuals shone in their own right, such as, for example, Cristóbal Litrán, author of the book entitled *La mujer en el Cristianismo* [Woman in Christianity], published in Barcelona in 1892, where he compiled various lectures given throughout his militant life. Odón de Buen, who wrote the preface for the cited book by Litrán; he convincingly defended the need for the "intellectual liberation of woman through the parting with her religious beliefs", both in the prologue and later in various articles mainly published in *Las Dominicales del Libre Pensamiento* [The Sundays of Freethought], between 1892 and 1908. José Francos Rodríguez, who belonged to the lodge *Amor* [Love] of Madrid between 1881 and 1886, edited *La España Masónica* [The Freemasonic Spain] and years later, as emphasised by professor Nash, clearly advocated for the full inclusion of woman in the social, political and labour world. Segundo Moreno Barcia, who belonged to the lodge *Brigantina* of La Coruña between 1883 and 1892, joined his voice to the previous ones in Freemasonic publications of national importance.

In this context it cannot be forgotten prominent writers such as Vicente Blasco Ibáñez, active Freemason in the lodges *Acacia* [Acacia] and *Federación Valentina* [Valencian Federation] of Valencia between 1888 and 1895. A good example of how he identified, in his writings, the emancipated woman with the freethinker woman was his article "La mujer y el niño" ["The Woman and the Child"]. It appeared in *La Humanidad* [Humankind] of Alicante, on 10th and 20th January 1889, and was reproduced in *La Razón* [The Reason] of Castellón, on 27th June 1889.

To these male personalities will join, above all, the female Freemasons Ángeles López de Ayala, Amalia Carvia Bernal, Ana Carvia Bernal and especially Rosario Acuña Villanueva. All of them, as we will detail later on, were engaged with an intense publicist activity and gave life to the first Spanish feminist organisations. However,

the starkest orientation was held by the few Freemasons who were active members in the ranks of anarchism; they were represented by the outstanding figures of José López Montenegro and Anselmo Lorenzo (Nash, 1983: 105-110, 310-311, 361-362; Álvarez-Lázaro, 2012: 193, 291-293, 299, 348-382).

VI. WOMAN IN THE LODGE

The varied existing concepts about woman had their reflection in the different ways of incorporating her to Freemasonry, which also meant different ways of interpreting what was established in Anderson's Constitutions. The United Grand Lodge of England and, in general, the powerful Freemasonry of Anglo-Saxon tendency did not admit (nor it admits) women in the Order because they consider it an institution that was traditionally made up of men and whose rites and symbols were male. To these arguments, large Freemasonic sectors added other reasons of extra-Freemasonic character and reasons derived from stagnant patriarchal conceptions. Roger Desmed makes an accurate summary about the most common type of judgements issued by the enemies of the initiation of woman, synthesised into six sections:

Physically, mentally and intellectually, woman is inferior to man, and therefore unable to access to the specifically masculine mysteries.

She would never be free, in the strict sense of the word, as required in the Constitutions of Anderson.

She could never part with religious and mystical atavistic ties. She was frivolous, vindictive, impulsive and inconstant.

She was unable to keep secret and, a fortiori, to observe the law of the Freemasonic silence.

Her presence in male lodges would distract brethren from their duties, and would prevent them from working seriously (Desmed, 1977: 388-389).

Certainly, supporters of Freemasonic initiation refuted the arguments adduced by their antagonists. On the one hand, they considered that, in the late nineteenth century, the segregationist justifications of the eighteenth-century Constitutions of Anderson no longer made sense. On the other hand, they found odious those excluding reasons of physiological, psychological, intellectual or domestic character maintained by the anti-feminist Freemasons. Amalia Carvia, for example, after having worked assiduously in the lodge Redención [Redemption] of Cádiz, quickly replied to the reluctant Freemasons with those words, published in the aforementioned newspaper of Alicante La Humanidad [Humankind], on 31th October 1889:

The experience has made you know the little damage we cause; we are neither the cause of riots nor we hinder the progress you keep... Stop talking those objectors of our sex, with their false arguments. The French Freemason, by using the

liberties of his country, founded the Adoptive Freemasonry. It is a prudent deed which grants woman beautiful faculties that are a comfort considering the situation she finds herself.

The rite of adoption is very acceptable for woman, as we shall see; the Order can hide its mysteries if they find that woman's education is still insufficient to fully understand the great symbolism of those mysteries.

These reasons will be respected. But those reasons argued on the basis of physiology and conveniences, those portraying woman as inept to share these works adducing the weakness of her sex and the obligations that tie her to her home, those reasons are highly refutable.

Under the generic trend of women's acceptance in Freemasonry, there was a decisive step in France in the late nineteenth century. Maria Deraismes (1828-1894) was a freethinker, a combative journalist, an active feminist and a talented orator. In 1893, after her initiation, eleven years before, in the male lodge Les Libres Penseurs [The Freethinkers] of Le Pecq, Deraismes founded Le Droit Humain [Human Right], a mixed Grand Lodge which immediately came to be led by the doctor Georges Martin. This international federation, as well as, later, the case of the Gran Logia de Holanda [Grand Lodge of the Netherlands] and of Jus Humanorum of Sweden, was characterized by being made up of men and women who had identical legal rights and obligations, and they practised the same Rite. Cécile Révauger, who writes Deraisme [sic], has emphasised that.

From 1893 s'ouvrent donc deux voies pour les femmes françaises, celle des loges d'adoption et celle de la mixité dans une obédience spécifique, la Fédération du Droit Humain qui a aujourd'hui une dimension internationale, et qui a connu des scissions et ramifications (Révauger, 2013 : 20).

Already in the twentieth century an independent female Freemasonry was organised, in some way as a consequence of the foundation of the Derecho Humano [Human Right] and, at the same time, of the real progress of equality between the two genders. In 1945, brethren of the Grande Loge de France [Grand Lodge of France] allowed Freemason women to create an autonomous Grand Lodge. At first it was called Union Maçonnique Féminine de France [Feminine Freemasonic Union of France], and in 1952 it was renamed Gran Logia Femenina de Francia [Female Grand Lodge of France]. Although it belongs to the tradition of Adoptive Freemasonry, in practice it is no less feminist than the Derecho Humano [Human Right] and has proven a sturdy fighting spirit in the struggle for women's rights. In the words of Françoise Gaspard, member of the Grande Loge Féminine de France [Female Grand Lodge of France],

the purpose of an exclusively female lodge is not to isolate women. Woman has lived in a society made by and for men. That's why women should work alone to become aware of her feminine world and freedom. Thus, after dealing with problems from the female point of view she can meet men and, together, seek solutions and both present their perspectives in absolute freedom (Gaspard, 1991: 97).

In the nineteenth-century Spain the lodges of the Gran Oriente de España [Grand Orient of Spain] of Juan Antonio Pérez and the lodges of the Suprême Conseil de France [Supreme Council of France] maintained the most ancient Anglo-Saxon tradition, but nearly all the other Grand Lodges counted on the presence of ladies in their lodges. However, the lodge Fe y Abnegación [Faith and Abnegation] of Cádiz came to prevent ladies from entering the temple precinct, despite being a "tenida blanca" [a ritual open meeting] and therefore open to the lay public, as it can be seen from the sessions on 13th March 1878 and 15th December 1879, collected in its "Libro de Actas del grado 1^o" ["Book of Minutes of the 1st Degree"] (which is preserved in the Archivo General de la Guerra Civil Española, AGGCE, 470-A [General Archive of the Spanish Civil War]).

In practice, three approaches coexisted in Spain about the relation between woman and Freemasonry. Firstly, the sectors which were intransigent with feminism also refused to accept woman's initiation; secondly, at the opposite pole, the egalitarian progressives defended woman's full integration into the lodges; and finally, the range of possibilists was divided into those who did not accept the female initiation and those who accepted without reservation the known formula of Adoptive Freemasonry. The case of brother "Pompey" from Cartagena, above-mentioned (Boletín y Revista Masónica del Grande Oriente de España [Bulletin and Freemasonic Journal of the Grand Orient of Spain], 15th July 1882: 217), is again representative of the conservative sector of these possibilists who, despite they did not find substantial differences between both sexes, opposed the Freemasonic regularisation of woman on the basis of the diversity of destiny:

It is not enough that the best intentions guide us. The elevation of woman to the fullness of Freemasonic spheres would be today a tremendous disruption in the rational and organised order of things [...] Since by virtue of it [...], the intrusion of woman in our mysteries could be considered as an embarrassing and laughable parody of the show produced by the Michel and their emulous, as well as being also seen as [...] a second edition of that social nonsense (Álvarez-Lázaro, 2006: 309-310).

The allusion to the French anarchist Louise Michel (1830-1905), one of the key figures of La Commune of Paris [the Paris Commune], is extremely

significant. The Michel had exercised, as Saillard (2001: 86) emphasises, "a truly repulsive fascination on the bourgeois opinion". Isabel Luna de Benaocaz, who had been arrested together with the accused of the Crime at Parrilla, had been nicknamed "Luisa Michel of Andalusia".

The vast majority of the 537 Freemasonic sisters who have been cataloged, were received in committees of adoption under the tutelage of male lodges. If the female committee in question succeeded in gathering a sufficient number of members, then it came to be known as lodge; but it was still supervised and controlled by the protective male brethren. In times of the Democratic Sexenio there were already known some feminine organisations of similar orientation to Adoptive Freemasonry. Thus, in 1872 the lodge of Madrid Hijos del Trabajo [Sons of Labour], which was sponsored by the Gran Oriente de España (GODE) [Grand Orient of Spain], founded an association of women called Las Hijas del Sol [Daughters of Sun]. Among its objectives there were –according to the statutes that we collected and published– physical, intellectual and moral education of woman, as well as charity and beneficence, without forgetting justice and mutual protection. Everything seems to indicate that this group was in direct relation with the magazine of the same name, in which Concepción Arenal collaborated (Álvarez-Lázaro, 1985: 99; Álvarez-Lázaro & Paz-Sánchez, 1990: 288-289; Álvarez-Lázaro, 2012: 324).

The subject has aroused the interest of several scholars. Simón-Palmer has emphasised, firstly, the effort of Concepción Arenal to found, in 1860, the Rama femenina de las Conferencias de San Vicente de Paúl [Female Branch of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul], whose objective "was to give practical witness of the Christian faith in the homes of the poor; and, in principle, in Spain they had the support of liberal sectors". In addition, Arenal had dedicated her manual *El visitador del pobre* [The Visitor of the Poor] to the Daughters of St. Vincent de Paul. And a few years later she was involved in the Spanish abolitionist tendencies, though, according to this author, contrary to what happened with figures such as Pilar Amandi de Ozores, Countess of Priegue, "Concepción Arenal, who will never want to be clearly linked to Freemasonry, although probably her father had been linked to it and she had good friends in its ranks, soon, since the Spanish Abolitionist" showed her distrust (Simón-Palmer, 2001: 186, 188-189, 194-195).

About the project of the "female institute" Las Hijas del Sol [Daughters of Sun], Simón-Palmer also emphasises (2001: 195):

The planned organisation is similar to that created by Concepción Arenal in the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, with the "tens", that is: "Ten Daughters of Sun gathered will form a constellation; ten constellations, a system; ten systems, an area and ten areas, a sky".

In her extensive biography of Concepción Arenal, Lacalzada de Mateo has emphasised, in this context, the corroborated fact that “Freemasons and freethinkers agreed on an idea of the human perfectibility, based on the free investigation of truth, the practice of justice and tolerance”, as well as an acceptance of “a creator principle that could be expressed in the idea of a Great Architect of the Universe”. She points out that, in conclusion, in the intellectual contributions of these sectors,

it is revealed the same active morality, the search for truth through intelligence and sensitivity that we have been found by studying Concepción Arenal. The conviction that it is men who make their own structures, and it is their humanising task to perfect them (Lacalzada de Mateo, 2012: 293-294).

During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, it was confirmed the existence of several of these lodges of adoption which belonged to different Grand Lodges. At least we are certain of the following: Hijos de la Virtud [Daughters of Virtue] of Alicante, 1883, GODE; Hijos de los Pobres [Daughters of the Poor] of Madrid, 1887, Gran Logia Unida de España [United Grand Lodge of Spain], GLUE; Amantes del Progreso [Enthusiasts of Progress] of Madrid, 1888, Gran Oriente Nacional de España, Ros-Morayta [National Grand Orient of Spain, Ros-Morayta], GONERM; Integridad [Integrity] of Barcelona, 1889, Gran Oriente de España, Rojo Arias [Grand Orient of Spain, Rojo Arias], GODER; Hijos de la Acacia [Daughters of Acacia] of Valencia, 1889-90, GODER and GOE; Creación [Creation] of Mahón, 1889-93, GOE; Hijos del Progreso [Daughters of Progress] of Madrid, 1889-93, GOE; Hijos de la Unión [Daughters of Union] of Valencia, 1892-95, GOE; Hijos de la Regeneración [Daughters of Regeneration] of Cádiz, 1895-98, GOlco, and Caridad Cartagenera [Charity of Cartagena] of Cartagena, 1893-94, Gran Logia Provincial de Murcia [Provincial Grand Lodge of Murcia], GLPMu.

Moreover, among the committees of adoption of certain importance, there stood out those sponsored by these lodges: Constante Alona of Alicante; Acacia [Acacia] and Valencia of Valencia; Vigilancia [Vigilance] of Murcia; Diez Hermanos y Caballeros de la Noche [Ten Brothers and Knights of the Night] of Cartagena; Estrella Flamígera [Blazing Star] and Espíritu Práctico [Practical Spirit] of Córdoba; El Porvenir [The Future] of Linares; Verdad y Progreso [Truth and Progress] and Columna Social [Social Column] of Málaga; Verdad y Fe [Truth and Faith] of Seville; Nueva Cádiz [New Cádiz] and Regeneración [Regeneration] of Cádiz; Unión y Sinceridad [Union and Sincerity] of Huelva; Comuneros de Castilla [Communal Land Owners of Castile], 5 de Abril de 1888 [5th April 1888], Hijos del Progreso [Sons of Progress], Hijos de Riego [Sons of Riego], Legalidad [Legality] and Unión es Fuerza [Union Is Strength] of Madrid; Hermanos de García Vao [Brothers of García

Vao], Progreso [Progress] and Reforma [Reform] of Valladolid; Hijos de la Humanidad [Sons of Humankind] of Salamanca; Luz de León [Light of León] of León; Hijos del Trabajo [Sons of Labour] of La Coruña; Francisco Arouet de Voltaire [François Arouet de Voltaire] of Ferrol; Colmena [Beehive], Lealtad [Loyalty] and Creación [Creation] of Barcelona; Amigos de la Virtud [Friends of Virtue] of Lérida, etc. (Álvarez-Lázaro, 2006: 310-311; Álvarez-Lázaro, 2002a: 137-156).

Together with the out-of-date formula of Adoption, Freemasonic institutionalisation of conservative feminism, the Hispanic Freemasonry was also a pioneer of the two types of progressive female Freemasonry which crystallised in the twentieth century: mixed lodges and autonomous female lodges. Quite frequently we have seen in boards of members of male lodges certain women working in the male Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, they had higher degrees and held important positions.

The following cases, among many others, may be representative: Suceso Sánchez, Orator of the lodge Legalidad [Legality] of Madrid and 18th degree in 1887; Ángeles López de Ayala, Secretary of the lodge Constancia [Perseverance] of Barcelona and 18th degree; Concepción Milián, belonging to the Chapter of Rose Cross Acacia y Severidad [Acacia and Severity] of Valencia; Ángeles Sanmillán, 9th degree in the lodge Estrella del Mediterráneo de Villanueva del Grao [Star of the Mediterranean of Villanueva del Grao] (Valencia); Isabel Zwonar, Orator of the lodge Concordia [Concord] of Barcelona; María Macías Pons, 27th degree and Orator of the lodge Karma [Karma] of Mahón; Ana Carvia, Secretary of the lodge Regeneración [Regeneration] of Cádiz; Jacinta Navarro Fonseca, Secretary of the lodge Nueva Cádiz [New Cádiz] of Cádiz and member of the Chapter of Rose Cross Cádiz [Cádiz] of the same city; Josefa Alba, 14th degree and member of the chapter Lealtad [Loyalty] of Málaga; María Gracia, 30th degree of the lodge Lealtad [Loyalty] of Málaga; Consuelo Delgado, 18th degree of the lodge Estrella Flamígera [Blazing Star] of Córdoba, or Josefa Ramírez of the lodge and chapter Hijos de la Humanidad [Sons of Humankind] of Salamanca and 9th degree (Álvarez-Lázaro, 1996: 324-325; Ortiz-Albear, 2007: s. v.).

Some of these cases, rather than resulting from arguments in favour of gender equality, were due to the ignorance or indifference of the lodges about what was legislated by their higher organisms, especially in relation to the Rites. We have already seen how Amalia Carvia accepted the Rite of Adoption as a lesser evil because the education of Spanish women was still very poor, but she neither adduced any reason of ritual order nor did she exclude the possibility of female initiations in Rites practised by male lodges. She herself, as well as her sister Ana, had been initiated into the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite in the lodge Regeneración

[Regeneration] and practised the same Rite in the lodge Hijas de la Regeneración [Daughters of Regeneration].

The lodge Hijos del Trabajo [Sons of Labour], leaded by Anselmo Lorenzo, made it clear, on more than one occasion, his disagreement with Adoptive Freemasonry, and defended the equality of sexes in the lodge. On an interesting letter (AGGCE, 618-A-17), jointly addressed to the chapter Juan de Padilla and to the lodge Comuneros de Castilla [Communal Land Owners of Castile] of Madrid, he said on 20th August 1887:

The Respectable Lodge Hijos del Trabajo [Sons of Labour] wants to associate woman and Freemasonic work, not in order to have her in a condition of adoption and dependence, as if she were a minor subject to permanent tutelage, but to elevate her to the status of active member, granting the initiated, as the brethren of the board members, the same rights and the same duties, because thought, virtue, right and duty, elements that constitute human responsibility and which together form justice, do not have gender [...] And if the Freemasonic world is indistinctly formed of men and women, although in disproportionate numbers because of the profane concerns, what right do we have to establish pre-eminence of man against woman? [...] Thus, the Respectable Lodge Hijos del Trabajo [Sons of Labour] has its doors open for the dignified, virtuous and progressive woman, and is honoured by counting among its columns on the regular attendance of a female illustrious worker, who deservedly holds a high Freemasonic degree.

Ángeles López de Ayala was another clear example of continuous protest against the existing differences between both sexes in Freemasonry. In fact, in 1895 she was affiliated to the male lodge Constancia [Perseverance] of Gracia, she had the 30th degree and held the position of Secretary. Finally, the establishment of female lodges with no tutelage was a characteristic fact of the late nineteenth century. Already in 1890, the just mentioned Ángeles López de Ayala gave evidence of its existence. Let us see what she said on a reply to the prelate of Santander, from the pages of the weekly of Alicante La Humanidad [Humankind] on 20th April 1890:

You (Bishop) assure that women have become part of that Freemasonic association, belonging to lodges of adoption, and even in that matter you find yourself somewhat behind; because today the woman, according to agreement of large and erudite Orients, can build lodges with the same rights and under the same conditions as those of men are constituted.

Within Freemasonic organisations, such as the Gran Consejo General Ibérico [Iberian General Grand Council] and its Gran Logia Simbólica Española del Rito Antiguo y Primitivo Oriental de Memphis y Mizraim

[Spanish Symbolic Grand Lodge of the Oriental Ancient and Primitive Rite of Memphis-Misraim], the tendency to overcome Adoptive Freemasonry should be quite general. This unique Freemasonic power, whose creation in Spain must be dated from 15th February 1887, was recognised in early 1889 by the Grand Council of Naples, which, previously, had been presided over by Garibaldi himself (Álvarez-Lázaro, 1996: 145). On 11th May 1892, it was published in its Boletín [Bulletin] an editorial comment to a letter from Isabel Galindo Torres, member of the Lodge Isis Lucentina of Lucena (Córdoba); it is very expressive on this matter:

Woman has the right to our full attention, and the Orientalists want her by our side with equal rights and duties as men. There it is the lodge Audacia [Audacity] of Herrera composed exclusively of ladies, and several lodges of our Grand Lodge where there are sisters initiated, since we owe adoption to the minors, workers or the elderly. Come, thus, woman to Freemasonry.

The lodge Audacia [Audacity] of Herrera (Seville), which was active between 1892 and 1896, even consisting exclusively of ladies, should have enjoyed complete independence in relation to the male lodges. This was another type of female Freemasonry that, without adopting the formula of the mixed Freemasonry, did not admit to being in the background compared to male Freemasonry.

VII. SPANISH FEMALE FREEMASONS AND FEMINISM

Concepción Fagoaga has emphasised the importance of Freemasonry and freethinking trend in the configuration of the historical origins of Spanish feminism. In this regard, she maintains the theory that the nineteenth century was indeed the period of formation of Spanish feminism, in which the pursued objective was not suffrage but the freedom to think, the female education to middle jobs and the access to a secular education. In the 1880s this feminism was being built in freethinking militant circles and Freemasonic lodges closely related to each other, which began to open protest spaces for women.

During the organisation of the feminist movement there will stand out just some forgotten women who, acting with coordination, connect their secular projects, which are those that gave consistency to the period of formation of Spanish feminism, with the strictly speaking suffragist projects of the period developed from 1915 (Fagoaga, 1996: 171-192).

Indeed, the great promoters of the feminist movement in Spain during the period of formation were simultaneously linked to Freemasonic lodges and to freethinking organisations. Although as a mere guideline, it is obligatory to refer to Rosario Acuña Villanueva, Ángeles López de Ayala, Belén Sárraga and

also to the sisters Amalia and Ana Carvia Bernal, all of them already familiar for us. Likewise, along with these female names it should be added those of Freemasons who also played a basic role in the birth and first stage of Spanish feminism (Álvarez-Lázaro, 1985: 191-196, 349-356; Álvarez-Lázaro, 1996: 312-322, 408, 427; Sánchez-Ferré, 1990: 164-174).

The writer from Madrid Rosario Acuña, who had already achieved success as a playwright in the seventies, in 1885 was already considered as "Heroine of Freethought" and a year later was initiated in the lodge Constante Alona of Alicante. Through her activities, books and articles in the republican and freethinking press her figure was exemplary for women who participated in the process of formation of the feminist movement. Until 1923, date of her death occurred in Gijón, she consistently followed the triple direction Freemasonic-freethinking-defender of woman's emancipation. With regard to the issue we are dealing with, she summarised her approaches in a discourse that she delivered in the late 1888 in the lodge Hijas del Progreso [Daughters of Progress] of Madrid, in which, at that time, she held the position of Orator: "the woman for the woman, the woman magnified, dignified by woman; the woman proving her strength as a thinking being, expressing her conditions as a rational being in a genuinely feminine field of action" (Álvarez-Lázaro, 1995: 197-202; 357-360).

In Barcelona Ángeles López de Ayala, who in the 1880s was very active in the Sociedad Autónoma de Mujeres de Barcelona [Autonomous Society of Women of Barcelona], founded in April 1898, along with the anarchist and also Freemason Teresa Claramunt and the spiritist Amalia Domingo Soler, the Sociedad Progresiva Femenina [Feminine Progressive Society], which was composed by female freethinkers from Barcelona. This society, which had close relations with the lodge Constancia [Perseverance], to which Ángeles López de Ayala belonged, can be considered as one of the most important feminist institutions of that time.

As revealed in its time by Sánchez-Ferré, the prolific Ángeles López de Ayala also founded and directed the first Spanish feminist newspapers, *El Progreso* [The Progress] (1896-1901), *El Gladiador* [The Gladiator] (1906-1908), *El Libertador* [The Liberator] (1910) and the *Gladiador del Libre Pensamiento* [The Gladiator of Freethought] (1914-1920), which will be the new bulletin of the Sociedad Progresiva Femenina [Feminine Progressive Society].

Belén Sárraga, wife of the freethinker Emilio Ferrero, was another prominent figure of the freethinking Freemasonic feminism who, until recent times, had been unjustly forgotten by our historiography. Little by little, the available information about this singular figure has increased significantly; she stood out in Spain between 1895 and 1906 (Mateo-Avilés, 1986: 174-182), and later in Latin America. In Málaga, in the summer of 1896,

Belén Sárraga, who was known in the lodges with the symbolic name of "Justice", was responsible for articulating the feminist movement around the Freemasonic enthusiast newspaper *La Conciencia Libre* [The Free Conscience] and the freethinking circle *Federación Malagueña* [Federation of Málaga]. This same propagandist, together with Ana Carvia, founded in Valencia in 1897 the *Asociación General Femenina* [General Female Association].

With questionable magnitudes but with certain facts, Walker has emphasised, on the other hand, Sárraga's opposition to the colonial wars during the end of the century by means of a risky and brave journalistic work, as well as through her determined commitment to republican and feminist ideals:

In Valencia, Belén Sárraga, a committed freethinker, anarchist, Freemason, and feminist propagandist, was arrested. Sárraga, born in 1874 [1872], was a teacher and journalist who had founded the *Federación de Grupos Femeninos de Valencia* in 1895. In 1897 she cofounded the *Asociación General Femenina*, located in Valencia [...], she also organized a society of women, mostly field laborers in the countryside around Málaga, which numbered about twenty thousand members [...], during the second Cuban insurrection Sárraga traveled throughout Valencia enlisting women to demonstrate against the war, promoting Cuban independence and the restoration of the republic (Walker, 2008: 47).

On several occasions I have drawn attention to the Freemasonic activities of the sister "Justice", that is, Belén Sárraga, since it was her symbolic name, for example in relation to the minutes of the lodge Constante Alona of Alicante (Álvarez-Lázaro, 2002a: 151-156; Álvarez-Lázaro, 2006: 317). As pointed out by María José Lacalzada de Mateo, Belén Sárraga was initiated into Freemasonry in late 1896, in the lodge *Severidad* [Severity] of Valencia, according to information obtained from the newspaper *La Antorcha Valencina* [The Valencian Torch].

She also appears linked to the lodge *Fe* [Faith] of Seville, where her name is listed in the "column of honour" of 1901 and, on the occasion of the *Congreso Universal de Libre Pensadores* [Universal Congress of Freethinkers], held in 1907 in Buenos Aires, she represented the lodge *Virtud* [Virtue] of Málaga and joined the Argentinian Freemasonry. She belonged to the *Supremo Consejo Universal Mixto* [Mixed Supreme Universal Council], and joined the ranks of the Argentinian Federation of the *Derecho Humano* [Human Right], the aforementioned *Le Droit Humain* [Human Right], until she was discharged in 1918 because of a typical conflict of powers. "Her life was marked by her adherence to the freethinking, feminist and republican federalist ideals to which she served with an intense dedication in the social and political spheres". Belén Sárraga and her husband settled in Uruguay in 1910

and, after a short stay in Portugal, they went to Mexico and stayed abroad until 1931. In 1933 she presented her candidacy at the elections in Spain as a candidate for federal Republicans for Málaga, but did not get the certificate of appointment. When the civil war began, she went into exile to Mexico (Lacalzada de Mateo, 1999: 70; Ortiz-Albear, 2007: 343-349).

Belén Sárraga was undoubtedly the most internationally renowned Spanish feminist, Freemason and freethinker of the late nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries (Ramos-Palomo, 2006: 689-708; Hottinger-Craig, 2013: 141-164). Regarding her Freemasonic initiation, Lacalzada de Mateo has emphasised certain aspects of the act of reception in the lodge Severidad [Severity] of Valencia, particularly the words by the Brother Cazalla, which underlined the great possibilities that were opened to the new sister; possibilities to attract woman towards Freemasonry in order to emancipate her and liberate her consciousness against fanaticism and ignorance. At the same time, he predicted days of glory and triumph for the Freemasonic organisation. Her mission, in short, would be to work and attract other women "towards light, consciousness and knowledge".

In short, it was not only a matter of freeing the consciences of the humankind through the joint action of all the freethinkers in the world; but, in particular, it was a matter of making women aware of the need to fight for obtaining the same political rights as men (Lacalzada de Mateo, 2006: 156).

It is said that when she was received, Sárraga responded to the words of welcome of her Freemason brothers with a premonitory statement: "I have not done anything, but I will". Ramos-Palomo writes that the sister "Justice"

shared tasks and rites with the men of her lodge outside the framework of female Adoptive Freemasonry, clearly discriminatory and paternalistic, forcing the construction of a real mixed Freemasonry, with the help of other Catalan and Andalusian female freethinkers (Ramos-Palomo, 2006: 697).

Aguado-Higón has emphasised, in general terms, the work developed in Valencia by these Freemason women, mentioning the cases of Ana Carvia, Amalia Domingo Soler, Mercedes Vargas and, especially, Belén Sárraga. "Talking about Belén Sárraga", she writes, "is to talk about the important core of the Valencian freethinking feminism". In this sense, she adds that, "the coordination that articulates the Valencian group was performed with the Sociedad Progresiva Femenina [Feminine Progressive Society] led by Ayala, and from La Conciencia Libre [The Free Conscience], which is presented with the motto «Libertad, justicia, fraternidad» [«Freedom, Justice, Fraternity»] and with Freemasonic iconography on its masthead" (Aguado-Higón, 2008: 221).

In Cádiz, Amalia and Ana Carvia coordinated the feminist movement around the lodge Hijos de la Regeneración [Daughters of Regeneration], founded in 1895, but previously they had already been very active in the lodge Regeneración [Regeneration]. The Hijos de la Regeneración [Daughters of Regeneration], together with the freethinking circle created in the same city in 1896, represented a key point in the Andalusian feminist movement at the end of the century. Also, on the initiative of the Carvia sisters, it was developed in Huelva the aforementioned Unión Femenina [Feminine Union] in 1898, whose main purpose was to emancipate women through comprehensive secular education. The Carvia sisters became one of the cornerstones of the Spanish suffragist feminism of the twentieth century because of their foundational initiatives: in Valencia with the journal Redención [Redemption] (1915) and with the Liga Española para el Progreso de la Mujer [Spanish League for the Progress of Woman] (1918), and in Madrid with the Consejo Supremo Feminista [Feminist Supreme Council] (Álvarez-Lázaro, 2002a: 155-156; Álvarez-Lázaro, 2006: 319-320).

Later, other authors have expressed themselves in this same vein. Authors such as Aguado-Higón when, exactly from the foundation of the aforementioned journal Redención [Redemption], she emphasises, about the work of the Asociación General Femenina [General Female Association] of Valencia and about the studied group of feminist and Freemason women, that "it will be a part of this same group of women which, since the nineteenth-century secular projects, will reformulate their approaches in a new phase that already was distinctly suffragist around 1915" (Aguado-Higón, 2008: 221).

There are some aspects that still require the continued effort of specialists in order to define the true impact of these interesting female personalities, within the framework of what, more than a decade ago, we defined as "a marginalised minority in a marginal group": the consistency of female presence in the lodges.

Thus, for example, the presence of Amalia Carvia Bernal, Piedad [Piety], Ana Carvia Bernal, Verdad [Truth], Dolores Guillén, Firmeza [Firmness], Juana Varo Moreno, Regeneración [Regeneration], and Luisa López Vargas, Caridad [Charity], is characterised by some striking facts: all of them are initiated, practically in group, in 1887, that is, with little difference of time by founding imperatives; and, as they join it, they demit from Hijos de la Regeneración nº 124 [Daughters of Regeneration No. 124]. The sisters Amalia Carvia and Ana Carvia voluntarily demit in March 1890; around that time Dolores Guillén is also granted with the plancha de quite [Document drawn up by the lodge and granted to those Freemasons who either wish to demit from the lodge or join another one]; Luisa López Vargas was expelled because of lack of attendance in August 1893;

and only Juana Varo Moreno left the lodge in July 1894 when she died, although it seems that she did not take more than the 2nd degree.

It is impossible to generalise from a single case (though with relevant personalities), but the detailed study of female presence in the Spanish lodges can offer, undoubtedly, strong arguments for reflection, which would involve the in-depth analysis of certain ideological affiliations and, at the same time, the more refined assessment of the socio-cultural and political impact of Spanish female Freemasonic group.

In this context, it has been pointed out that the theoretical articulation of thought of the Freemason women of Cádiz, "represented in Amalia Carvia", would be based on a program that would include the woman's regeneration as "the basis of family and society"; the evaluation of the Freemasonry's mission in the process of "emancipation of the female gender" through instruction and education; the admission of woman in Freemasonry "on equality with men" and, definitively, the struggle against religious fanaticism and clericalism, which condemned women to a position of social and cultural inferiority (Enríquez del Árbol, 2002: 381, 397-398). But, can such an ambitious program be developed in such a short time? Are we in the face of mere programmatic statements or, rather, in the face of a worthwhile project for the transformation of women's status in southern Europe, in the medium or long term?

It is also important to insist on an aspect to which I have already drawn attention at other times: the question of woman and school secularism of the nineteenth century, since it is deeply linked with this emerging Spanish feminism. In addition to the diverse independent schools for girls run by lay teachers, early feminist societies gave in their regulations a very outstanding place to teaching. These were the cases of the aforementioned Sociedad Progresiva Femenina [Feminine Progressive Society], the Asociación General Femenina [General Female Association], and also of the Unión Femenina [Feminine Union] of Huelva, created by the initiative of Amalia Carvia in 1898. As happened with educational centres inspired by the action of males, schools that gave shape to the lay movement could not endure for a long time because of the difficulty of recruiting qualified teachers, the lack of means and the closed hostility of the Catholic Church.

These schools could neither be distinguished by their great educational innovations, but they "formed a front of resistance against ecclesiastical power in teaching and managed to plough some alternative to the current political-educational system" (Álvarez-Lázaro, 2002b: 263).

In relation to gender perspectives, María Dolores Ramos-Palomo and Sofía Rodríguez-López have emphasised, among other considerations, the need to value the importance of the leading roles in this exciting historical period, considering that these and

other women exemplify those leaderships and at the same time they "highlight both the interest in the subject which postulates gender history, and the tension between women's rights and universal rights". In the opinion of these authors: We can affirm that the marginalisation of women in the field of civil and political citizenship was counteracted by means of the foundation and running of magazines, collaborations in the press, the opening of secular schools, creation of associations and community networks, rallies and propaganda trips and participation in "political" rituals and picnics.

From the point of view of these discourses and experiences, there underlies the notion of citizenship and of social movements, related to the civic virtues shown by women in the field of reproductive work, where much of the emotional relationships develop (Ramos-Palomo & Rodríguez-López, 2012: 72).

Evidently, many of the principles and ideals defended by women such as Belén Sárraga or Amalia Carvia, among many others, begun a process of consolidation regarding femininity, "with the new and growing prominence" (Sanfeliu, 2008: 78) of women in political life.

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