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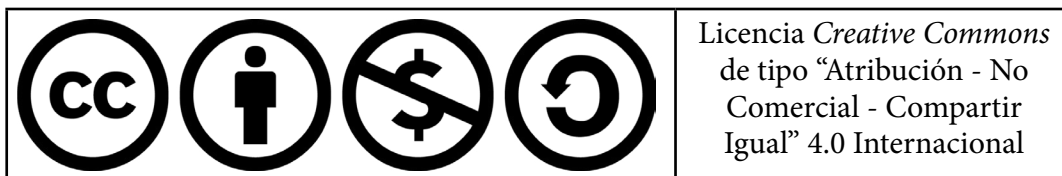


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Portada: Ceremonia de adopción, París.

Ceremonia de recepción de un francmasón en una logia de adopción bajo el Primer Imperio. Litografía realizada con acuarela y gouache de principios del siglo XIX. Museo de la Masonería, París (Coll. GODF).

Fuente: VVAA, Deux siècles et demi d'histoire du Grand Orient de France (Paris: Éditions internationales du Patrimoine, 2016), 34.



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La REHMLAC+ es una revista electrónica, multidisciplinaria y semestral, que nace para la difusión científica en torno a la historia global de las masonerías. Publica artículos de investigación, entrevistas (en particular a experiencias investigativas en tesis), reseñas de actividades académicas, reseñas de publicaciones y semblanzas. Esta revista es editada por la Editorial de la Sede del Pacífico de la Universidad de Costa Rica y se dirige a toda interesada o todo interesado en la temática, desde miembros de la comunidad académica hasta el público en general.

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## Presentación

### *The Crossroads of Gender and Freemasonry: An Introduction*

Freemasonry and gender are two topics that are not everyday material for news, but often, when they appear, they make the headlines. Usually, both subjects are wrapped in misconceptions. Although not originally complementary, Freemasonry and gender started to frequently appear together in the news and masonic discussions after 2018.<sup>1</sup> This surge was mostly derived from the fact that the United Grand Lodge of England (UGLE), that year, issued a decree establishing that a transgender woman should not be encouraged to leave their male-only masonic lodges that they once joined. The decree also compelled lodges under their jurisdiction to accept applications from transgender men.<sup>2</sup> On the other side of the Channel, the Grand Orient de France eight years earlier voted in favour to let a transgender woman, Olivia Chaumont, to still be a member of their organization after their transition from male-to-female.<sup>3</sup> The decision was based in the principle that a male Freemason who after initiation transitions to be a woman does not cease to be a Freemason. This is precisely the same principle of the United Grand Lodge's "Gender Reassignment Policy".

In this Dossier on "Gender and Freemasonry" we argue that such topics have to be studied in the specific cultural context in which they were developed. Regarding the complex term of gender, we based our approach in the works of gender scholar, Judith Butler. In her works *Gender Trouble and Bodies That Matter*, she proposes a social and cultural constructivist approach to gender. In *Gender Trouble* Butler utilizes Michel Foucault's thesis that power is productive of gender and sexuality. In *Bodies That Matter* she introduces a more sophisticated view of the study and conception of gender, as a performance or performativity arguing that:

...performativity is thus not a singular 'act,' for it is always a reiteration of a norm that is a set of norms, to the extent that it acquires an act-like status in the present; it conceals or dissimulates the conventions of which it is a repetition. Moreover, this act is not primarily theatrical; indeed, its apparent theatrics is produced, to the extent that its history remains dissimulated (and, conversely, its theatrics gains a certain inevitability, given the impossibility of a full disclosure of its historicity)...a performative is that discursive practice that produces that which it names.<sup>4</sup>

1 Damien Gale, "Freemasons to admit women - but only if they first joined as a men", *The Guardian* (1st August 2018), <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2018/aug/01/freemasons-to-admit-women-but-only-if-they-first-joined-as-men>; Richard Pérez-Peña, "English Freemasons Open the Door to Transgender Members", *The New York Post* (1st August 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/01/world/europe/uk-freemasons-trans-gender.html>; Christelle Schreiber-Di Cesare, "Masonas, las pioneras del feminismo en España", *El País* (23rd December 2018), [https://elpais.com/sociedad/2018/09/26/actualidad/1537964544\\_186888.html](https://elpais.com/sociedad/2018/09/26/actualidad/1537964544_186888.html)

2 United Grand Lodge of England, *Gender Reassignment Policy*, adopted in 17 July 2018. Can be consulted at <https://www.ugle.org.uk/gender-reassignment-policy>

3 In 2010 Olivia Chaumont became the first trans woman recognized by the Grand Orient de France. See Anastasia Vécirin, "Franche maçon". *Libération*, 8 March 2011, [https://www.liberation.fr/societe/2011/03/08/franche-macon\\_719948](https://www.liberation.fr/societe/2011/03/08/franche-macon_719948)

4 Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), 12-13, 95. See also *Gender Trouble* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990).

In sum, gender performativity and human sexuality are manifestations subject to cultural and social constructions. These elements are influenced by history, society, power, and ideology. Thus, historical phenomena are constantly changing them. Hence as scholars of gender and Freemasonry we need to be aware of the locus of enunciation, time, and latitude in which discourses and practices relate to these topics. This approach facilitates the understanding of the role of gender and sexuality in the study and practice of Freemasonry.

Exclusion in Freemasonry<sup>5</sup>, in all its forms, is often academically debated. Academics have been also researching masonic practices that differed from its original setting of “male and believer-only”.<sup>6</sup> For instance, readers of the *Revista de Estudios Históricos de la Masonería Latinoamericana y Caribeña* (R+) will not be alarmed by the term “Freemasonries”.<sup>7</sup> According to recurrent articles, the expression Freemasonries would reunite the multiplicity of the masonic practices into one single, etic, term.<sup>8</sup> The idea of Freemasonry, in its usual spelling, may be championed to define that phenomenon as a social and cultural practice. However, to think about its reality in singular form becomes a drastic distortion of its history. Since the beginning, the masonic organization was built as an array of groups that rather than been a monolithic organization were a versatile group. Thus, to refer to Freemasonries would make more sense based on the current situation of the Craft.

If we think about Freemasonry as an “invented tradition”,<sup>9</sup> it is possible to define its official origins in London, in the first quarter of the eighteenth-century. From there, it was less than a hundred years before the Fraternity<sup>10</sup> reached the entire globe. Being a social and cultural practice with no canonical creed, Freemasonry became the perfect vehicle for new ideas. Since there was no central world organization, the plasticity of the Craft became its strongest asset.

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- 5 Ricardo Martínez Esquivel, Yván Pozuelo Andrés y Rogelio Aragón, *300 años: masonerías y Masones 1717-2017. Tomo IV Exclusión* (Mexico City: Palabras de Clío, 2017).
- 6 Marco Antonio García Robles and Alma Celia Galindo Núñez, “La iniciación masónica en los dibujos animados”, *REHMLAC+* 10, no. 2 (diciembre 2018–mayo 2019): 52–72 ; Jorge Luis Romeu, “Análisis de la visión de algunos europeos, sobre las masonerías autóctonas de Cuba y Puerto Rico, a finales del siglo XIX”, *REHMLAC+* 10, no. 1, (mayo–noviembre 2018): 89–107; Carlos Francisco Martínez Moreno, “Auge y Caída de la Masonería en México en el Siglo XIX. La Exclusión de la Mujer bajo la mirada del Discurso Masónico de Laureana Wright González”, *REHMLAC+* 4, no. 2 (diciembre 2012–abril 2013): 132–155.
- 7 See Guillermo de los Reyes Heredia, *Herencias secretas: Masonería, política y sociedad en México* (Puebla: Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla, 2009), 38, 143–144, 177.
- 8 Eduardo Torres Cuevas, “Masonerías en Cuba durante el siglo XIX”, *REHMLAC* 3, no. 2 (diciembre 2011–abril 2012): 70–105; Felipe Corte Real de Camargo, “‘The Freemasons are useful to the regime’: An analysis of the representations of Freemasonry on cinema and its utility on reinforcing or criticizing the establishment”, *REHMLAC+* 10, no. 2 (diciembre 2018–mayo 2019): 1–20; Valeria Aguiar Bobet, “Masonerías, colonialismos e imperialismos”, *REHMLAC+* 9, no. 2 (diciembre 2017–abril 2018): vi–viii. For a discussion of Emic and Etic terms in Freemasonry, Córte Real de Camargo, “When Freemasonry becomes Masonism: approaches to Emic/Etic distinctions, Freemasonry, and History”, in *La Masonería. Mito e Historia*, coords. José Leonardo Ruiz Sánchez, Yván Pozuelo Andrés, Antonio Ventura Pires y José Eduardo Franco (Zaragoza: Centor de Estudios Históricos de la Masonería Española; Lisboa: Universidad de Sevilla, 2018), 51–59.
- 9 For the historiographical concept of invention, see Eric Hobsbawm, “Inventing traditions”. In E. J. Hobsbawm and T. Ranger, eds., *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1–14; for the idea of Freemasonry as an invented tradition Andrew Prescott and Susan Mitchell Sommers, “The Origins of Freemasonry and the Invention of Tradition”, *Ritual, Secrecy, and Civil Society* 7, no. 2 (2020): 1–20; and Roger Dachez, *L'invention de la Franc-Maçonnerie : des opératifs aux spéculatifs* (Paris: Vega, 2001).
- 10 To avoid repetition the term Freemasonry is often substituted for “the Fraternity”, “the Craft”, and “the Order”.

Freemasonry landed in different countries, quickly acquiring the local cultural, political, and religious colours. Initiation of women, involvement with politics, blending religious aspects, supporting autocracies, instigating revolutions; freemasons did everything that can be praised by some, and at the same time, condemned by others. Nonetheless, two issues are controversial among its practitioners: the belief in a Supreme Being and the admission of men only. The first book to lay general rules for modern Freemasonry was *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons* (1723),<sup>11</sup> written by the Scottish reverend Dr. James Anderson. The *constitutions* are an assortment of myths, old documents claimed as being related to the Order, and an embellished account of the beginnings of modern Freemasonry in England.

A section of the *Constitutions* called “Charges of a Free-Mason”, compiled the basic regulations of the Craft. The six core points were “to be read at the making of new brethren, or when the Master shall order it.”<sup>12</sup> Among those regulations, express instructions on who should be admitted into the new-born society: “The Persons admitted Members of Lodge must be good and true Men, free-born, and of mature and discreet Age, no Bondmen, no Women, no immoral or scandalous Men, but of good Report.”<sup>13</sup>

For the eighteenth-century English society, there was nothing scandalous in these bylaws; an active role in society was something reserved for a few individuals. Besides its slightly latitudinarian aspect,<sup>14</sup> the *Constitutions* did not cross the channel successfully. The legacy of this book, and its potential as the ground rule for Freemasonry, started to be explored in continental Europe only in the following century. The inefficiency, in European soil, of the rules that conducted English Freemasonry, reveals a different practice.<sup>15</sup> In Netherlands and France some lodges had women among their members, and by the mid eighteenth century a variant of masonic ritual<sup>16</sup> was put in place for women’s lodges: the adoption rite.<sup>17</sup> In masonic orthodoxy, the adoption lodges are regarded as an appendant body, but not Freemasonry. Thus, overrunning the experience of the adoption rite as genuinely masonic. However, if analysed by etic definitions, the Craft can be understood as a social practice within which the adoption rite was one of its many liturgies.

11 James Anderson, *The Constitutions of the Free-Masons* (London: William Hunter, 1723).

12 Anderson, *The Constitutions*, frontispiece.

13 Anderson, *The Constitutions*, 51.

14 For this aspect of the Constitutions, see Cécile Révauger, “Franc-Maçonnerie et Religion en Grande-Bretagne : vers une religion d’État”, in *Franc-Maçonnerie et Religions dans L’Europe des Lumières*, eds. Charles Porset et Révauger (Paris : Honoré Champion, 2007), 29–32

15 Margaret Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991).

16 Although not entirely theorized, rite and ritual have very specific meanings in Freemasonry. Ritual means the liturgy of a ceremony, so every ceremony has a ritual that shares a similar formula (opening of the lodge, closing of the lodge) but have a different goal, such as to initiate someone into Freemasonry, or to inaugurate the new administration of a lodge. Rite stands for a group of degrees bundled together in progressive order, forming an overarching meaning. Although every rite has the same three degrees (Entered Apprentice, Fellowcraft, and Master Mason), they differ on the number of higher degrees (any degree after Master Mason), its teachings and subdivisions.

17 Jan A.M. Snoek, *Initiating Women in Freemasonry: The Adoption Rite* (Brill: Leiden, 2012). See also, Janet Burke and Margaret Jacob, “French Freemasonry, Women and Feminist Scholarship,” *The Journal of Modern History* 68, no. 3 (1996): 513–549.

Although the Freemasonry practiced in the islands of Great Britain and Ireland kept its character of men's club sociability, its European counterparts adopted a more esoteric and liberal approach. For instance, in the nineteenth century several Grand Lodges (central administrations) suppressed the necessity of belief in a supreme being. Concomitantly, women were initiated in some male lodges that understood that discrimination was against the masonic ideals. Some other masonic rites accepted women as full members. That is the case for the Egyptian Rite, founded by the infamous Count of Cagliostro in Bordeaux, during the 1780s, and its derivative Rite of Memphis-Misraïm, that ended by surpassing its original in members and popularity.

At the same time, in the United States, appendant orders were created to accommodate masons' relatives (wives, sisters, daughters, etc.). These orders mixed Freemasonry with the evangelicalism preponderant in the, then, young nation. "Order of the Eastern Star", "Order of the Amaranth", "Ladies' Oriental Shrine of North America", "The order of the White Shrine of Jerusalem", all of these orders had (and have) their own rites and rituals, besides providing a hub for the Freemasons' families to socialize together. It is important to note that there are also exclusively women's lodges outside the United States and do not admit men, as well as co-Masonic lodges which admit both men and women. According to De Los Reyes and Rich, "in many cases the male Mason's reception of female Masons is considerably less cordial than the attitude displayed towards orders like the Eastern Star which do not claim to be working the Masonic rituals".<sup>18</sup> This separation between the originally-exclusive male Freemasonry and the tutored-mixed co-masonry would gain another layer of separation: Prince Hall Freemasonry, the Freemasonry exclusive to African Americans, also has its ladies' orders: the "Heroines of Jericho", and the "Order of Cyrenes".<sup>19</sup>

During the Eighteenth century, the masonic lodges presented a distinctly revolutionary trait that manifested itself in the practice of religious tolerance, the acceptance of women within Freemasonry, and the promotion of a liberal idiosyncrasy. As documented by masonic historians, such as Margaret Jacob,<sup>20</sup> the revolutionary and liberal attitude of masonic lodges clashed head-on with the intolerance of absolutist and monarchical regimes. The integration of women into Freemasonry created a significant conflict with the intolerance of certain lodges, particularly those of Anglo-Saxon tradition. As Guillermo de los Reyes has pointed out, "Conflict that remains today and seems that within some Masonic traditions will remain indefinitely. What we might call an 'arroseur arrosé' is, the 'bigoted tolerant' or a fraternity without sorority".<sup>21</sup>

The campaign for women's rights knocked the doors of the masonic temples during the late nineteenth-century. Maria Desraimes, a campaigner for secularism and women's rights

18 De los Reyes Heredia and Paul Rich, "Gender, Sexual, and Racial Trouble: The Crossroads of North American Freemasonry in the Twenty-First Century," *REHMLAC* 4, no. 2 (diciembre 2012-abril 2013): 167. <https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rehmlac/article/view/12190/11472>

19 See De los Reyes Heredia and Paul Rich, "Gender, Sexual, and Racial Trouble," 156-170.

20 Jacob, *Living the Enlightenment*, 15

21 De los Reyes Heredia, "Exclusión", in 300 años, 6.



was initiated in the French lodge “Libre Penseurs”, in 1882. Later, in 1893 she took a step further, assisted by George Martin, by founding a masonic body that would accept men and women, now known as the “Ordre Maçonique Mixte International Le Droit Humain”. Since then, several Grand Lodges and Grand Orients started to accept women as members, and some others were created exclusively for women. The Grand Orient of France became a mixed obedience in 2010, and the United Grand Lodge of England makes more public by the day its institutional recognition of the female Grand Lodges. However, integration is still a sensitive issue for most “regular” Grand Lodges worldwide.

The criticism of this situation became a double-edged sword. On criticising “men only” masonic bodies, there may be some restraint into freedom of association, a usual aspect of western democracies. By overlooking female and mixed lodges, as not being “proper Freemasonry” hence the necessity of integration, one may be validating a discriminatory vision, diminishing those who decided to promote their vision of the Craft, and not conform to the pre-existing one. Finally, this discomfort with male, female, and mixed lodges, instead of a mixed universal Freemasonry, may be the very product of the vision of “regular” masonic bodies, which usually promote their version of the Craft as the real thing. Maybe, to access the history of Freemasonries, as we bring in this number, is to realise that the plural form is more historically accurate than the convenience of the monolithic versions spread by the critics and the proselytes.

### ***Content Description***

As discussed above, this issue is dedicated to the analysis of the intersections of gender and Freemasonry in Europe and Latin America. Thus, in the Dossier on “Gender and Freemasonry” there are essays written by scholars approaching the study of Freemasonry from the lens of gender and women’s studies. The decision to discuss this theme shows that R+ intend to expand the discussion of masonic themes beyond what has traditionally been published. This Dossier promotes the need to study the ways in which Freemasonry has faced equality and equity between men and women and other gender proposals that break established binaries.

Following chronologically on this history, Cécile Révauger narrates not only the history of female and mixed Freemasonry after the eighteenth-century, as it also brings the discussions that it provokes. The focus of Révauger’s article is an international discussion: the use of gendered pronouns in Freemasonry. “Call me sister!”, is a tour de force, in which the author gifts us with her scholarship and experience.

Emmanuela Locci in her article, “Breves reflexiones sobre la falta de impacto de la masonería femenina o mixta en la sociedad italiana” explores the limited impact female or co-masonry has produced in Italy today. In her pioneer essay, Locci concludes that even though women have a limited impact in Italian society, there are critical issues in which co-masonry and female Freemasonry have contributed to the formation of a civil society.

László Vári presents two Hungarian women freemasons in Eighteenth and Nineteenth centuries. The article navigates the reader through a different story of the Order, especially in Hungary. In that country, male, female, and mixed freemasonries came to life at once after the change of the regime in 1990.

Marco Antonio García Robles in his creative essay, “De la homofobia, la misoginia y el machismo a la inclusión en la masonería mexicana”, analyses his experience as a gay mason. He discusses the reactions that Mexican Freemasonry has had in issues related to same sex marriage. On the one hand, García Robles argues that there is a resistance from some member of the Craft; on the other, there is an institutional openness found in different Mexican Masonic obedience towards sexual diversity, and the reactions to three marital recognition ceremonies with same-sex couples using texts adapted from the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite.

In their article, “Teósofas, masonas y feministas (Costa Rica, 1890-1923)”, María José Quesada Chaves and Luz Mary Arias Alpízar, bring a case that is extremely representative: Costa Rica. That country is a unique example of how Freemasonry gave capillarity to modernity.<sup>22</sup> Chávez and Alpízar analyse social, cultural and gendered aspects of a group of women that were theosophists, freemasons, and feminists. Far from being an uncanny combination, the article presents how these ideas feed each other, and ended up fabricating what we understand as modernity.

María José Quesada Chaves in her article, “La lucha por el sufragio femenino en Costa Rica (1923-1953): relaciones entre la Sociedad Teosófica, la comasonería y la Liga Feminista” studies in depth how several personalities who were pivotal in the suffrage feminism movement in Costa Rica, during the first half of the twentieth century, did it from the spaces that the Theosophical Society of Costa Rica and/or the only co-Masonic lodge in Costa Rica (the Saint Germain Lodge no. 62) provided. Quesada concludes that in such spaces of sociability feminist ideologies were promoted. This article also explores the importance of the feminine suffrage campaign that was seeking equal rights for men and women.

In addition to the articles of the Dossier on “Gender and Freemasonry”, this issue contains other articles, interviews, and book reviews that shed new light in the study of Freemasonry and other ritualistic organizations. Amongst the articles are: “La sociabilidad teosófica en Cuba. Una primera aproximación a la historia del movimiento teosófico cubano en su etapa inicial (1894-1904)” by Andres Rivero Aponte; “Presencia e influjo del liberalismo en el Instituto Literario de Zacatecas, 1837-1853” by Jesús Domínguez Cardiel, Juan Manuel Muñoz Hurtado y Edgar Fernández Álvarez; “Jonathan Swift, The Earl of Rosse, Duke of Wharton, and Sir Charles Wogan: The Irish-Spanish Masonic Connection” by Marsha Keith Schuchard; “La cuestión masónica en la izquierda italiana. De la ‘excomuniación’ del congreso socialista de 1914 a los primeros congresos

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22 For an analysis of the Costa Rican case, Ricardo Martínez Esquivel, *Masones y Masonería en la Costa Rica de los albores de la modernidad (1865-1899)* (San José: Editorial Universidad de Costa Rica, 2017).

de la internacional comunista” by Marco Novarino; and “*Un Siglo de Acción Social Masónica: El caso de Tálca, Chile (1911 – 2010)*”, by Raul E. Sanchez Andaur.

Although all the contributions are remarkably meaningful to the field of masonic studies, and to Freemasonry as a practice, there is a lot left to be said and researched. The idea of this critical cluster was ignited not only by the UGLE’s decree on gender reassignment,<sup>23</sup> but also by the reactions to it. Several practitioners took social media as a platform to express their frustration on the matter, recurrently making use of impolite and hate language. Other Freemasons welcomed the decree, demonstrating that there are different expectations within “regular Freemasonry” on what should be the future of the Craft.

As researchers, our role is more analytical than normative. However, it is undisputable that the link between Freemasonry and gender relations will be decisive for the future relevance of the different masonic bodies. That is the relevance of the academic study of Freemasonry, and even of the public debate on it; the Order that was hardly secret is now even less so. Freemasonry is under public scrutiny but most people, whether they are Freemasons or not, have a distorted image of the actual role of the Craft in history. Hence the relevance of this critical cluster and of R+ as a journal: if it is crucial for us to endorse science to preserve practical advances in our lives, it is also crucial to uphold humanities and social sciences to maintain and advance intellectual gains.

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Felipe Côte Real de Camargo  
Guillermo de los Reyes  
Bristol and Houston, November 2020

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<sup>23</sup> It is important to mention that gender transition and gender reassignment are terms that go beyond the physical alterations to the body. Transgender people in our society are usually reduced to their “trans-ness” instead of being allowed complex, fully realized human experiences. Our mainstream society only focuses on transgender people’s ability to go through daily life without others making an assumption that they are transgender. “When transgender people are living as their authentic selves, and are not perceived as transgender by others, that does not make them deceptive or misleading.” <https://www.glaad.org/reference/transgender>

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