



INSTITUT DU GENRE EN GÉOPOLITIQUE

GENDER AND FREEMASONRY : A SOCIO-SITUATED UTOPIA ?

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INTRODUCTION

Space for reflection and spirituality¹, discreet or even secret micro-society², school of life and place of socio-cultural encounters, quest of identity, human communion or even relation to the world³, freemasonry alternates between traditions and evolutions. Condemned by some, fantasised by others, Freemasonry intrigues as much as it disturbs⁴. Its creative utopia of humanism and liberalism of thought (liberty, equality, fraternity, tolerance, etc.) is often misunderstood; its system of initiation and internal development of its members through esoteric, symbolic and ritual practices, is criticised and misinterpreted : the general public considering them as “mysterious” and “elitist”, “conspiratorial” or “sectarian” methods⁵. Yet far from being ideal, Freemasonry was nevertheless a precursor in certain areas : atheism, secularism, interculturality⁶, etc.

Professor and Freemasonry and Enlightenment specialist, Cécile Révauger, highlights in her book *The Long March of Freemasons* (2018)⁷, the ideological-structural variations, sometimes conservative (resistance to inclusive writing⁸ for example), sometimes progressive (women’s and mixed lodges⁹), having punctuated its existence. According to Cécile Révauger,

¹ RÉVAUGER. Cécile. *The Long March of Freemasons*. France, United Kingdom, United States. Éditions Dervy. Paris. 2018. P° 8.

² AIMÉ. Magali. *Woman and Freemason. Words of apprentices, silences of companions*. Éditions Dervy. France. 2012. P° 18.

³ BRYON-PORTET. Céline. KELLER. Daniel. “An utopia of connection to re-enchant the world. The triple alliance : to connect to oneself, to others and to the world”. *Masonic utopia. Improving mankind and society*. Éditions Dervy. Paris. 2015. Pp. 57 – 106.

⁴ SCHREIBER. Jean-Philippe. *Contemporary forms of anti-masonicism : Sciences of religions*. Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles. Coll. « Problèmes d'histoire des religions ». Brussels. 228 pages.

⁵ BRYON-PORTET. Céline. « Communicational evolution of Freemasonry : from silence to media coverage ? ». In *Communication & langages*. Vol. 164. N° 2. 2010. Pp. 99 – 115.

⁶ Original passage : Freemasonry would not settle for stating beautiful ideas while insisting on the universality of the human race. It made interculturalism possible and thus profoundly disrupted a culture that as inherently compartmentalised : social, ethnic, and religious mixing.

⁷ RÉVAUGER. Cécile. *The Long March of Freemasons*. France, United Kingdom, United States. Éditions Dervy. Paris. 2018. 182 pages.

⁸Original passage : « Human Rights (first mixed lodge founded in 1892) has always refused to feminize titles. As for the mixed English and American obediences, to compensate for the absence of male and female in the English language they wanted to display the absence of gender distinction by including brothers and sisters under a single term, of course, that of “brother” [...] However, as if by chance, it was the title of “brother” that was retained and not that of “sister” to designate all the members. At a time when the greatest French male obedience has made the step of accepting sisters, it would not be inconceivable that one more step would be taken towards gender diversity, and that the functions would be feminized. When several brothers, as well as some sisters, violently oppose it, others say that it is a detail, which leaves them indifferent. Everything here is symbolic, but that’s the whole point ! When we look closely at the debate on the issue of the feminisation of titles, we notice that you can’t see the wood for the trees, and that it is in fact a fundamental problem». Ibid. Pp. 115 – 116 / 116 – 118.

⁹Ibid. Pp. 39 – 87.

« everything is possible, the greatest rigidity and the greatest flexibility¹⁰ ». Porous to cultures, sensitive to the transfer of ideas, Freemasonry offers a «miniaturised representation of the characters and behaviours of social life. Everything being seen and felt through a zoom, flaws as well as qualities ¹¹ », explains the Freemason author Magali Aimé in her book *Woman and Freemason, Words of apprentices, silences of companions* (2012)¹².

Although this report does not cover much of the origins of Freemasonry, a mixture of historical sources and myths¹³, as well as the innumerable polymorphic variations of this institution (regular and dogmatic/irregular and liberal, speculative/operative, male/mixed/female, etc.), however, it tries to approach Freemasonry under the prism of gender, through a problematic questioning in particular of its creative utopia, and more specifically the philosophical, conceptual and implicit thought patterns that underlie it.

Methodological boundaries and limits to the approach

First of all, the said introspection is based on gender¹⁴ as an analytical tool to reveal a gendered construction of society, as well as the principles, values, beliefs and doctrines that make it up. An essentialist bicategorisation that still divides and ranks men and women. It imprisons individuals in normative shackles that influence their perceptions of identity, their relationships with others and their vision of the world. Internalized and invisibilized mechanisms (models, conventions, stereotypes, etc.) that relate on one hand to gender as an artificial legitimization of a "natural biology", and on the other hand refer, in an intersectional manner, to other socially constituted dynamics: race, class, culture, etc. The aim of this exploration is therefore to examine, to identify and even to comment on the constructivist biases that build this spiritualist as well as humanist organisation via the research subject of Freemasonry, and to initiate elements of reflection on gender, the Masonic utopia and on what could potentially interconnect the two.

Secondly, this study is based exclusively on scientific and generic writings of a didactic or popularising nature. In order to avoid any preconceived ideas, hasty judgements or fallacious *a priori*, it was important to refer to sources written by researchers, enthusiasts and specialists in Freemasonry. Diverse personalities, often masons, who offer both specific and complementary insights into what constitutes present-day Freemasonry: its historical construction, but also its contemporary modernisation. Referring to their words allows us to contextualise, clarify and question this institution and the representations, imagined or proven, that it conveys.

¹⁰Ibid. P° 19.

¹¹ AIMÉ. Magali. *Woman and Freemason. Words of apprentices, silences of companions*. Éditions Dervy. France. 2012. P° 19.

¹² Ibid. 136 pages.

¹³ HECQ. Françoise. « Feminism and Freemasonry ». In *L'Université des Femmes*. [Online]. Published in Dember 2007. Accessed 7th June 2020. Available on : file:///C:/Users/Hello/Downloads/an15_2007_feminismefrancmaconnerie.pdf.

¹⁴ DEGAVRE. Florence. ZANONE. Damien. « Gender and gender studies, definitions ». In *Épistémologies de la recherche en études de genre*. Inter-university Master of Gender studies course. Université Catholique de Louvain (administrative headquarters. Academic Year 2019-2020.

Finally, before starting the analysis itself, we will situate the intellectual and ideological positioning of this observation. Cécile Révauger demonstrates it: "No history is totally objective; it always reflects the point of view of its author [...]. No author is invisible. The point is that they never try to hide, to conceal themselves or to close doors. It is up to readers to open the ones that suit¹⁵ them. It is indeed essential to specify the socio-situated point of view adopted¹⁶, so that it can shed light on the possible, and more than likely, limits and subjective pitfalls of the method. But stating one's angle of approach also serves, as Donna Haraway developed¹⁷, to interrogate, recontextualise and position oneself in relation to [scientific objectivity¹⁸]. A 'sacerdotal'¹⁹ objectivity or 'axiological neutrality', which for a long time, invisibly and unconsciously again, classifies knowledge (its production, validity and dissemination) between knowledge held by eminent, often male, scientists and philosophers²⁰ and the rest. Donna Haraway and various other feminist authors have denounced this control of knowledge "controlled by male philosophers who codify the canon of knowledge²¹". A gendered knowledge factory that testifies to a form of exclusivity and (male) claim to erudition and wisdom²², especially scientific. A theorisation which, under the guise of scientific objectivity and an approach to truth, has conveyed, and sometimes continues to do so, the opinions and socio-situated paradigms of a dominant hegemony; disregarding or ignoring those of individuals who are de facto categorised in an inferiorised otherness.

In summary, this study denotes from an external point of view, a secular, uninitiated, female perspective on a situated subject, Freemasonry, with a situated posture, gender.

PART I - THE MASONIC UTOPIA: A HISTORICAL LEGACY

¹⁵ RÉVAUGER. Cécile. *The long march of the Freemasons*. France, Great Britain, United States. Éditions Dervy. Paris. 2018. P° 8.

¹⁶ HARAWAY. Donna. *Situated knowledge: the question of science in feminism and the privilege of the partial perspective*". In *Ferbos.jeanfrancois.free.fr*. [On line]. Published in 2007. Accessed 21 April 2020. Available at: http://ferbos.jeanfrancois.free.fr/psychanalyse-et-creation/IMG/pdf/4_savoirs_situes_8.pdf.

¹⁷ A theorist and pioneer of cyberfeminism.

¹⁸ HARAWAY. Donna : *Situated knowledge: the question of science in feminism and the privilege of the partial perspective*". In *Ferbos.jeanfrancois.free.fr*. [On line]. Published in 2007. Accessed 21 April 2020. Available at: http://ferbos.jeanfrancois.free.fr/psychanalyse-et-creation/IMG/pdf/4_savoirs_situes_8.pdf.

¹⁹ Derived from the original word 'sacerdos', which means 'the function of a priest that is particularly respectable because of the devotion to others that it requires'. The term is 'adjectivised', hijacked, in this work to point out in an admittedly very ironic way the almost sacred, valorisable and valued and therefore highly recommended character of so-called scientific objectivity. "Sacerdoce". In *Larousse.fr*. [Online]. Accessed June 9, 2020. Available at: <https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/sacerdoce/70425>.

²⁰ HARAWAY. Donna : *Situated knowledge: the question of science in feminism and the privilege of the partial perspective*". In *Ferbos.jeanfrancois.free.fr*. [On line]. Published in 2007. Accessed 21 April 2020. Available at: http://ferbos.jeanfrancois.free.fr/psychanalyse-et-creation/IMG/pdf/4_savoirs_situes_8.pdf.

²¹ Ibid.

²² This could be transposed to the famous Enlightenment of the 18th^e century.

The term "utopia" was conceived by the English author Thomas More, in his iconic work *De optimo reipublicae statu, deque nova insula Utopia* (1516)²³. This word, derived from the Latinised Greek "u - topia", etymologically means "nowhere" and is considered to be "the description of an imaginary world, outside our space or time [...]"²⁴; a possible (re)invented universe, straddling the line between the speculative and the practical, drawing its inspirations and forms from dreams and psychoanalysis, but also from social, philosophical and even political criticism and reconstruction.

The main theme of Céline Bryon-Portet and Daniel Keller's in-depth work²⁵, the Masonic utopia²⁶ is described in particular as being a "utopia of individual and collective improvement, which is based on a symbolic device and aims for a change in intra-mural and extramural behaviour, thus forming initiates, capable of bringing about a better and more enlightened society; "Centripetal and centrifugal, initiatory and societal, [the Masonic utopia] offers a paradoxical process of collection and deployment, an invitation to introspection and travel"²⁷. Thus, this founding utopia would be translated into reality by a desire, both collective (in the lodge) and individual (outside the "temple"), to build a better society: "Improve man to improve society. Or better still, to improve both man and society, to strive for the progress of humanity, as some rituals suggest, with the aim of building an ideal and fraternal world"²⁸.

The examination of the Masonic utopia serves here as a philosophical pretext, a conceptual point of view as well as a critical theme for the exploration of Freemasonry. The investigation of its context of emergence, the overview of its historical evolution, but especially the reappropriation of this founding utopia by its members will help to understand this organisation; what meaning(s) do Freemasons still attach to this utopia today and in what way is it potentially gendered?

1. Recontextualisation²⁹

²³ STOUVENEL. Victor (trans.). *The Utopia of Thomas Morus*. Paulin Libraire - Éditeur. Paris. 1842. 224 pages.

²⁴ RUYER. Raymond. "Chapter One: The Utopian Gender". In *L'Utopie et les utopies*. Publisher "Gérard Monfort". 1988 [1950]. P° 3.

²⁵ BRYON-PORTET. Céline. KELLER. Daniel. *The Masonic Utopia. Improving man and society*. Éditions Dervy. Paris. 2015. 393 pages.

²⁶ FRITSCHER. Frédéric. "The Masonic Utopia". In *The Chain of Union*. Vol. 72. N° 2. 2015. Pp. 3 - 3.

²⁷ LECORDIER. Yves. "The Masonic Utopia of Céline Bryon-Portet and Daniel Keller". In *Humanisme*. Vol. 307. N° 2. 2015. Pp. 86 - 87.

²⁸ FRITSCHER. Frédéric. *Loc. cit.*

²⁹ NAUDON. Paul. *Histoire générale de la Franc-maçonnerie*. Éditions Charles Moreau. Pantin. 2004. 251 pages.

On June 24th of 1717, four London lodges³⁰ merged into a "grand lodge". The Grand Lodge of London, the first "Masonic obedience³¹", thus marked the birth of modern Freemasonry. This emergence is contextualised on one hand in the English Enlightenment (parliamentary monarchy, "relative religious tolerance", "scientific boom"), and on the other hand in the traditional and secular operative environment³² of the building lodges. Since the 1600s, speculative masons³³ have gradually been accepted. With the liberalisation and decline of the operative environment, speculative masonry finally took off during the 18th^e century, heir to the operative lodges of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. However, initiation into the craft was transformed into a symbolic initiation: intellectual, spiritual, ideal and fraternal construction replaced material construction. The philosophical principles of the Grand Lodge of London were published and written in 1723 by the Reverend James Anderson, under the title *The Old Charges of Free and Accepted Masons*³⁴. This compilation and rewriting of ancient manuscripts, the "Old Charges"³⁵, relates the mythical, legendary and symbolic substratum of the builder's trade, as well as the rules of the trade, the "statutes" of the guilds of operative masons from the 14th to the 17th century.

Finally, by constituting itself as a "centre of union³⁶", Freemasonry aspired to become a fraternal, universal, tolerant³⁷ and pacified meeting structure; in contrast to the political climate and the wars of religion that preceded 1717. It then developed throughout the world where it was tolerated (this was not the case with totalitarian regimes, for example). Its structure, which is the repository of an ancestral initiatory heritage, is based on rites, rituals, myths, legendary stories and symbols. Its implementation results in differentiated approaches and plu-

³⁰ Lodge: "room, temple, especially arranged where the masons meet" (former definition) or "whole of the masons of a workshop". LIGOU. Daniel. Dictionary of Freemasonry. Presses Universitaires de France. France. [1987] 2006. P° 715.

³¹ Obedience: "association of Masonic lodges recognising a common organisation and administration. If all the lodges practice the same rite, the Obedience is called Grand Lodge; if it practices several, they form a Grand Orient or Federation of Rites. Ibid. P° 861.

³² Operative: "this is the 'craft' Masonry that preceded 'speculative' or 'modern' Masonry". Ibid. P° 873.

³³ Speculative: "It is classic to oppose "operative" Freemasonry, that of architects and stonemasons, and "speculative" Freemasonry, i.e. that which now only includes men - with rare exceptions - who are not involved in the building trades. Ibid. P° 1144.

³⁴ "Anderson's Constitutions. In [Misraim3.free.fr](http://misraim3.free.fr). [Online]. Published 2012. Accessed 6 June 2020. Available at: <http://misraim3.free.fr/franc-maconnerie/Anderson.pdf>.

³⁵ The oldest of these 125 preserved "Old Duties" is the "Regius" manuscript, dated 1390. LIGOU. Daniel. Dictionary of Freemasonry. Presses Universitaires de France. France. [1987] 2006. Pp. 870 - 871.

³⁶ The "centre of union" is one of the founding principles laid down in Anderson's Constitutions (1723). Original passage: "a Mason is obliged, by virtue of his title, to obey the moral law, and" is bound to "Religion, on which all men are agreed [...]. Hence it follows that Masonry is the centre of union and the means of conciliating a sincere friendship among people who could never otherwise have made themselves familiar with each other. P° 207.

³⁷ Tolerance is the constitutive and ideal pillar of Freemasonry. ARVELLE. Joel. Being a Freemason in Belgium. 80 answers to the questions you may have. Edited by J. Bonivert and J.-M. Dubray. Belgium. 1989. P° 33.

ral sensibilities. To cite only a few cases, and in a general way, here are a few examples of its many variations.

The first one is that between the so-called "regular" lodges and obediences, and those called "irregular". The "regular", traditional, dogmatic (theistic) and masculine lodges affiliate and refer directly to the United Grand Lodge of England (constituted in 1813), "considered to be the 'Mother Grand Lodge' of all the Grand Lodges in the world³⁸". These lodges and obediences, which are widely established in the English-speaking world, follow the Landmark tradition³⁹ and have remained exclusively male and misogynistic. No woman is eligible for initiation, or even allowed to visit. The content of these lodges and obediences is "purely" ritual, and they refrain from political themes and discussions.

Conversely, within the irregular lodges, and in a somewhat reductive and caricatural way, the lodges described as "irregular" are liberal, adogmatic, unisex (male/female) or mixed. More developed in Western Europe, they claim a total freedom of conscience and thought: their "speculative work" privileging ritual and symbolism on one hand; reflection and society on the other hand thanks to the organisation of conferences and debates.

Within these French-speaking and Western (France and Belgium) "irregular" lodges, there are also other criteria that distinguish them from one another: notably those of "gender" and "tendency". These lodges are therefore subdivided into male, female and mixed lodges⁴⁰ on one hand, and lodges with a "ritual" or "societal" vocation on the other. The former aim at a traditional masonry, essentially centred on the "fundamentals" of existence via the initiatory process and the symbolic substratum. They focus on the improvement of their members, as sources of their individual radiance on the social forum. The latter are the extension, within the lodge, of societal considerations and problems: they aspire to the improvement of "Humanity" and the emergence of an "ideal" society. They finally adapt, in a way, the Masonic practices to an applied research of societal and ethical issues⁴¹.

Finally, obediences, jurisdictions and lodges also diversify according to Rite and Degree. The Rites are "initiatory systems organised according to a progression by degree; each degree is based on a ritual, a legendary narrative and appropriate and specific symbols⁴²". They are practised equally by male and female masons, with the exception of the English structure, which is predominantly male. Finally, the lodges and Masonic bodies can present an initiatory progression and a different number of degrees. Some, known as "symbolic lodges", are limi-

³⁸ BAUER. Alain. DACHEZ. Roger. *The 100 words of Freemasonry*. Presses Universitaires de France. Coll. "Que sais-je? Paris. 2007. P° 86.

³⁹ These were "intangible institutional rules based on the former statutes of the builders. In fact, they were prescriptions concerning the physical aptitudes indispensable for the profession". Thus, among the Masonic traditionalists, some justified the exclusion of women by the fact that construction, and therefore speculative Freemasonry, was a "man's trade". NAUDON. Paul. *Histoire générale de la Franc-maçonnerie*. Éditions Charles Moreau. Pantin. 2004. P° 227.

⁴⁰ See the chapter on women and Freemasonry.

⁴¹ BRYON-PORTET. Céline. KELLER. Daniel. *The Masonic Utopia. Improving man and society*. Éditions Dervy. Paris. 2015. Pp. 275 - 299.

⁴² BAUER. Alain. DACHEZ. Roger. *The 100 words of Freemasonry*. Presses Universitaires de France. Coll. "Que sais-je? Paris. 2007. P° 84 - 85.

ted to the first three degrees, the most widespread model in the world, while others, known as "High Grades", are dedicated to the other degrees.

PART II - WOMEN AND FREEMASONRY : A BELATED RECOGNITION

Historically misogynistic as attested in its constitutional charter of 1723⁴³ (the Anderson Constitutions), Freemasonry officially opened up to women towards the end of the 19th^e century. Even if the historiographer Cécile Révauger mentions a female presence prior to this century (Lady Elisabeth Aldworth in 1712⁴⁴, Mary Barister in 1714⁴⁵, Hannah Mather Crocker around 1798⁴⁶, or the Lodges of Adoption⁴⁷), the latter are the exception. The first mixed obedience, the International Mixed Masonic Order "Le Droit Humain", was founded in France in 1892. The first exclusively female French obedience was created in 1952⁴⁸, and its Belgian equivalent in 1981⁴⁹. In France, the creation of a women's masonry was envisaged as early as 1744, but it was not formalised until 1952 following the contemporary women's

⁴³ In the section devoted to the "Ancient Obligations of Free and Accepted Masons", the paragraph dealing with "The Lodge" states: "The Persons admitted to membership in a Lodge must be good and loyal Men, born free, of the Age of maturity of mind and Prudence, neither Serfs nor women nor immoral or scandalous Men, but of good repute." Anderson's Constitutions. In [Misraim3.free.fr](http://misraim3.free.fr). [Online]. Published 2012. Accessed 6 June 2020. Available at: <http://misraim3.free.fr/franc-maconnerie/Anderson.pdf>.

⁴⁴ Initiated in Lodge No. 44, Doneraile Manor. REVENGE. Cécile. The long march of the Freemasons. France, Great Britain, United States. Éditions Dervy. Paris. 2018. P° 10.

⁴⁵ Accepted into the Company of Masons in London. Ibid. P° 11.

⁴⁶ Possibly having founded the first and only all-female lodge, the St. Anne's Lodge. Unfortunately, there are no records to support this hypothesis. Ibid. P° 14.

⁴⁷ From 1760-70 onwards, Adoption Lodges appeared, the date of their appearance being disputed by the authors. The Lodges of Adoption are considered to be "parasonic groups, constituted by regular Brethren, to satisfy the curiosity of women, to silence calumnies and to give to the Masonic festivals [...] an attraction that a purely male meeting could not have". LIGOU. Daniel. Dictionary of Freemasonry. Presses Universitaires de France. France. [1987] 2006. P° 14.

⁴⁸ Original passage: "The women's lodges gained in importance from 1760 onwards, so much so that in 1774, the Grand Orient de France decided to regularise a state of affairs without infringing the rules of the Order. This led to the creation of the Lodges of Adoption, based on men's workshops and run by their officers with the mission of carrying out charitable works [...]. The contemporary movement for the emancipation of women was bound to have repercussions on Freemasonry. The beginning of this was the initiation, by a dissident lodge of the Scottish Rite, Les Libres Penseurs, of Peck, of the famous propagandist Maria Deraismes, on 14 January 1882. She [...] founded, with the help of Georges Martin, a mixed obedience, the Droit Humain [...]. In 1901, it took the form of an international organisation which today has 40 national federations. NAUDON. Paul. Histoire générale de la Franc-maçonnerie. Éditions Charles Moreau. Pantin. 2004. Pp. 230 - 231.

⁴⁹ ARVELLE. Joel. Being a Freemason in Belgium. 80 answers to the questions you may have. Edited by J. Bonivert and J.-M. Dubray. Belgium. 1989. P° 7.

emancipation movements. Finally, in Great Britain, a country renowned for its "regularity", you can now also find two mixed and two female obediences.

Cécile Révauger adds that Freemasonry has, for many years, ignored and ostracised women⁵⁰ both in its history and in its research. "It was not until the end of the 20th century^e that the first writings on women and Freemasonry appeared⁵¹. Previously, studies were carried out by "amateur historians, often Freemasons themselves, who were mainly interested in highlighting the history of a particular lodge and therefore had little interest in the very marginal presence of women in the 18th and 14th centuries. Significantly, it was when research into Freemasonry became academic that women Freemasons gained a certain visibility⁵². In concrete terms, and in relation to this theme, we could mention, for example, that in the chapter devoted to some figures of Freemasonry in Alain Bauer and Roger Dachez's book, no woman's name is mentioned. Similarly, in the research and popularisation works of Paul Naudon⁵³, Joël Arvelle⁵⁴ or Céline Bryon-Portet and Daniel Keller⁵⁵, the pages devoted to women (their role, their place or simply their presence) are largely in the minority⁵⁶. This reveals a lack of interest, an oversight, or even a non-recognition of women in the history of Freemasonry⁵⁷, literary and scientific production, or within society more generally, and illustrates once again a gender inequity. This bias stems from an overall social and political framework and is one that Freemasonry, even contemporary Freemasonry, tends to conform to⁵⁸.

Today, however, despite some reluctance and other resistance, women are now an integral part of Freemasonry, having acquired their places in both mixed and female lodges⁵⁹. But is

⁵⁰ RÉVAUGER. Cécile. The long march of the Freemasons. France, Great Britain, United States. Éditions Dervy. Paris. 2018. P° 106.

⁵¹ Ibid. P° 5.

⁵² Thanks to authors such as René Le Forestier, Françoise Jupeau-Requillard, Gisèle and Yves Hivert-Messeca, Alexandra Heidle and Jan Snoek to name but a few. RÉVAUGER. Cécile. "Women and Freemasonry, from the origins to the present day". In Portal de Revistas Académicas. [Online]. Published on 1^{er} December 2012. Accessed 13 May 2020. Available at: <https://revistas.ucr.ac.cr/index.php/rehmlac/article/view/12154/11429>.

⁵³ Paul Naudon was a French historian and writer. NAUDON. Paul. General history of Freemasonry. Éditions Charles Moreau. Pantin. 2004. 251 pages.

⁵⁴ ARVELLE. Joël. Being a Freemason in Belgium. 80 answers to the questions you may have. Edited by J. Bonivert and J.-M. Dubray. Belgium. 1989. 123 pages.

⁵⁵ BRYON-PORTET. Céline. KELLER. Daniel. The Masonic Utopia. Improving man and society. Éditions Dervy. Paris. 2015. 393 pages.

⁵⁶ One of them has 8 pages out of 250, the other has 2 pages out of 121 and the last one has 10 pages out of 385.

⁵⁷ PERROT. Michelle. Women or the silences of history. Flammarion. Coll. "Champs Histoire". France. [1998] 2020. 704 pages.

⁵⁸ RÉVAUGER. Cécile. The long march of the Freemasons. France, Great Britain, United States. Éditions Dervy. Paris. 2018. P° 107.

⁵⁹ BAUER. Alain. DACHEZ. Roger. The 100 words of Freemasonry. Presses Universitaires de France. Coll. "Que sais-je? Paris. 2007. P° 44.

this enough to qualify Freemasonry (and *a fortiori* its philosophical principles and its underlying utopia) as egalitarian, non-discriminatory, non-sexist, and simply non-gender-biased? Magali Aimé argues that there is "no sexism or segregation in the behaviour of women belonging to a female obedience [...]. All Masons consider themselves equal, whatever their rank in society, whatever their functions [...]"⁶⁰. Joël Arvelle, a Freemason, relates that "on the moral level, the Mason will perfect himself and will fully attain their potential by conforming ever more intensely to four great fundamental principles of Freemasonry. The first three are contained in the triad: liberty, equality, fraternity. The fourth one is tolerance"⁶¹. Alain Bauer and Roger Dachez, both Freemasons, describe in their book that "fraternity is the fundamental value of Freemasonry. Members immediately welcome a new initiate by calling him or her 'My Brother' or 'My Sister' [...]"⁶². The latter add, moreover, that humanism is at the heart of Masonic discourse and concerns. "Freemasons aspired to become citizens of the world [...]. The humanism of Freemasons expresses the hope - perhaps a little utopian, it is true - that a more fraternal and peaceful world is possible and that the Masonic values of secularism and tolerance, enlightened by initiation, can help to bring it about"⁶³. To conclude, Paul Naudon writes: "Freemasonry [...] centre of union [...] focus of convergence towards the fullness of all that concerns man without distinction of race, opinion or religion [...] will thus contribute to giving a soul to the world that is being built on a global scale despite ideological and interest barriers and to responding to the imperative need for a neo-humanism in search of a universal and transcendent value"⁶⁴.

From these various extracts, which are not exhaustive, a few words nevertheless recur regularly. Among others, the terms equality, freedom, fraternity, humanism, tolerance, initiation and universality. For modality reasons, the next section focuses on the concepts of equality, fraternity and universality.

1. Masonic values : a gendered reappropriation?

Masonic values should not be conceived as hermetic monolithic paradigms, independent of each other. On the contrary, they should be seen as interconnected principles, each one carrying and reflecting the same conceptual, philosophical and ideological matrix, that of the 18th century's Enlightenment. The interest of the present observation is not to relate to the sexist, patriarchal and discriminatory thinking of that time, contained and relayed in the Anderson's Constitutions of 1723, but rather to discover whether these original schemes were able to impregnate the modern conception and interpretation of these values in the minds of the authors selected.

1.1 Equality

⁶⁰ AIMÉ. Magali. *Woman and Freemason. Words of apprentices, silences of companions.* Éditions Dervy. France. 2012. P° 22.

⁶¹ ARVELLE. Joël. *Being a Freemason in Belgium. 80 answers to the questions you may have.* Edited by J. Bonivert and J.-M. Dubray. Belgium. 1989. Pp. 26 - 28.

⁶² BAUER. Alain. DACHEZ. Roger. *The 100 words of Freemasonry.* Presses Universitaires de France. Coll. "Que sais-je? Paris. 2007. P° 43.

⁶³ Ibid. P° 107.

⁶⁴ NAUDON. Paul. *General history of Freemasonry.* Éditions Charles Moreau. Pantin. 2004. P° 238.

In one of his writings⁶⁵, Daniel Ligou⁶⁶ described women's Freemasonry as parallel: "There is no place in this paper for judging the validity of women's initiation, which is a delicate problem that can only be resolved subjectively [...]"⁶⁷. A statement which implies that female masonry is delicate and subjective, in opposition, implicitly, to a male masonry of reference which is natural, objective and does not require validity. One might ask, following these remarks, what is the definition and meaning of equality in Freemasonry, and whether it has the same "value" within female and male Freemasonry?

If Daniel Ligou's sentence must be recontextualised to the 1980s, Magali Aimé's more contemporary ones shed some light on this question of a differentiated perception of equality. Thus, in a passage in which she motivates her membership of an exclusively female lodge, she states: "Female Freemasonry does not claim equality but otherness, nor does it want to be different, it wants to be complementary [...]. It seems obvious and natural to me to be in a female obedience⁶⁸". This statement is interesting because it contains different representations and doctrines relating to feminism on one hand and gender on the other. The notions of 'otherness', 'difference', 'complementarity' and 'nature' refer specifically to essentialist/differentialist feminism⁶⁹. A feminism, or rather a social perception and construction of gender, which claims a differentiated nature of women, complementary to that of men⁷⁰, and which would justify, in this case, the creation of sex- (or gender-) separated lodges within Freemasonry. Thus, in the same way that some men are reluctant to have a "distracting" female presence in their lodges⁷¹, some women legitimise their membership of a unisex lodge because they wish to "escape the games of seduction and develop their own vision of the world, based on their specific experience⁷²". Moreover, they feel more themselves and more fulfilled in an

⁶⁵ A French historian and writer.

⁶⁶ LIGOU. Daniel. History of Freemasons in France. Privat. Coll. "Bibliothèque historique". 1995 [1981]. 412 pages.

⁶⁷ GASPARD. Françoise. "Freemasonry, the Republic and the exclusion of women". In Les Cahiers du CEDREF. Hors-série 2. 1996. Pp. 63 - 75.

⁶⁸ AIMÉ. Magali. *Woman and Freemason. Words of apprentices, silences of companions*. Éditions Dervy. France. 2012. P° 21.

⁶⁹ COLLIN. Françoise. "Deconstruction / destruction of gender relations". In *Sens Public. Revue électronique internationale*. [On-line]. Published in October 2003. Accessed June 3, 2020. Available at: http://www.sens-public.org/article.php3?id_article=43.

⁷⁰ A feminism that is opposed in its conception to egalitarian and universalist feminism. Rejecting assimilation to an exclusively male system, differentialist feminists prefer to imagine a society where women and men evolve together, but distinctly according to the specificities of each of the two sexes. These essentialist/differentialist feminists also advocate a female culture that is justified by biological determination and constitutes their very essence. This is both an intellectual and a militant position, which was put forward during the first feminist wave and defended in particular by bourgeois liberal women, and which is based on the dissymmetry of the sexes and values the differentiated construction of gender.

⁷¹ BARRET-DUCROCQ. Françoise. "Can mixed gender in Freemasonry advance the cause of women?". In La chaîne d'union. Vol. 64. N° 2. 2013. Pp. 50 - 59.

⁷² BU. Peter. "On women's initiation and co-education". In The Chain of Union. Vol. 57. N° 3. 2011. Pp. 57 - 65.

(exclusively) female environment⁷³. Marie-Thérèse Besson, Grand Mistress of the Grande Loge Féminine de France (2015-2017), also supports this point of view in an interview: "In everyday life, we are always mixed. Places where there only are women are rare. So we build ourselves among women but that doesn't mean we are against men [...] . I think that women do not say the same things in the presence of men. This allows us to get intimate⁷⁴".

A proposal that once again puts forward an attitude differentiated by gender and background, and indirectly corroborates a societal dissymmetry. "It is because their nature is "otherness" that women could, or even should, be confined to certain roles, assigned to their place. This statement is thus regressive before or at the same time as it is transgressive, and its elements of regression and transgression are difficult to discern. Nothing sometimes resembles an obscurantist definition of the feminine more than a feminist definition of the feminine⁷⁵", observes Françoise Collin, a Belgian philosopher and feminist, in her article *Essentialisme et dissymétrie des sexes* (1989).

This emphasis on a naturally feminine essence legalising gendered (patriarchal) bicategorisation also implies, on the one hand, that there are only two genders, 'in the image' of the biological male and female sexes. This view of gender on the basis of sex actually dualises⁷⁶ identity, 'humanity⁷⁷' and the world as a whole. In addition to obliterating, marginalising and even stigmatising those individuals who promote a decompartmentalisation of gender and a non-binarised reinvention of identities (queer thinking⁷⁸). On the other hand, this 'justified' cleavage relates to the constitution of a feminine identity constructed under the prism of otherness, as Simone de Beauvoir had furthermore attested in her iconic work *The Second Sex* (1949)⁷⁹. A female identity that could only be perceived and formed as a counterpart to the

⁷³ SAINT-JULLIAN. Elise. "Women and Freemasonry: feminine or feminist lodges? In Information.TV5monde.-com. [Online]. Updated 28 December 2016. Accessed 29 May 2021. Available at: <https://information.tv5monde.com/terriennes/femmes-et-franc-maconnerie-des-loges-feminines-ou-feministes-145843>.

⁷⁴ SAINT-JULLIAN. Elise. "Women and Freemasonry: feminine or feminist lodges? In Information.TV5monde.-com. [Online]. Updated 28 December 2016. Accessed 29 May 2021. Available at: <https://information.tv5monde.com/terriennes/femmes-et-franc-maconnerie-des-loges-feminines-ou-feministes-145843>.

⁷⁵ COLLIN. Françoise. "Essentialism and gender dissymmetry". In *Les Cahiers du GRIF*. N° 40. 1989. Pp. 91 - 104.

⁷⁶ A nuance can be made in this regard. Françoise Collin explains that difference and duality are not necessarily equivalent and are not synonyms. But she also recognises that 'the term "différencialiste" is used to describe the thinking that affirms a certain duality of the sexes, even if it criticises the way in which this duality is translated into the social sphere'. COLLIN. Françoise. "Deconstruction / destruction of gender relations". In *Sens Public. Revue électronique internationale*. [On-line]. Published in October 2003. Accessed June 3, 2020. Available at: http://www.sens-public.org/article.php3?id_article=43.

⁷⁷ "Humanity" as the totality of human beings and not 'humanity' as an anthropo, andro and Western-centric conception of the term.

⁷⁸ Subversive and innovative, queer thinking renews erotic grammars, diversifies points of view (female gaze), hijacks the codes of hegemonic, institutional and dominant masculinity, participates in the evolution of mentalities and finally contributes in this way to the decompartmentalisation of identities and the flowering of new sexual and societal potentials. BREY. Iris. "Chapter 4: Queer. In *Sex and the series*. Editions de l'Olivier. France. 2018. Pp. 187 - 243.

⁷⁹ Simone de Beauvoir had indeed detected the gendered conditioning of social roles and the differentiated identity formation between men and women, materialised through her famous maxim "One is not born a woman, one becomes one". BEAUVOIR. Simone (de). *Le Deuxième Sexe*. Gallimard. Paris. 1949. 978 pages.

male identity. An otherness that is certainly complementary, but which confines the female individual to the role of 'Other' and in a way denies her the status of a subject in her own right. In this case, whether in Magali Aimé's quotation or in Simone de Beauvoir's thesis, it is feminine freemasonry or the woman who is fulfilled in otherness, not the man.

Finally, although these statements do not in fact convey any normative injunction, they do say a lot about the vision and mentality of the people who use this type of discourse⁸⁰. We could ask ourselves about the philosophical conceptions and ideologies that circulate and are shared in Freemasonry in relation to the construction of gender, and within current women's Freemasonry.

1.2 Fraternity and Universality

Fraternity and universality refer, once again in a schematic way, to the debate between differentialism and universalism⁸¹. In which way does the notion of fraternity, as forged and desired by Freemasonry, male, female and mixed, participate in this problematic. The analysis will thus correlate the words of Joël Arvelle⁸²: "Masons consider themselves as 'Brothers' or 'Sisters', which is how they call each other. They feel they are truly members of the same family, whatever their political opinions, beliefs, races [...]"⁸³; and Céline Bryon-Portet and Daniel Keller's: "To unite all Freemasons around common values, ignoring their social, cultural, religious and political differences [...]. Individual singularities are contingent, therefore, and consequently relative, variable in time and space, but humanity is what constitutes the absolute, invariable essence, common to all individuals, which allows a rise in generality and invites us to see in every layman a potential initiate and brother⁸⁴"; and finally those of Magali Aimé: "Semantically the word fraternity excludes the feminine [...]. Universal fraternity [...] by ignoring this form of sexism, unites all human beings without any exclusions. Let us also state that fraternity enlightened by knowledge is a precious asset that reminds us that "all men are brothers" without ever admitting or thinking that the Other can be an enemy [...]. The word fraternity is used here to signify the bond that unites all men, as part of a family, but of a

⁸⁰ Performativity looks at the invisible and cultural patterns of thought that make up language. A conception that questions linguistics, words or even words as a revealing mirror of a certain ideological vision and socio-situated posture. Original passage: "Butler argues that subjects are constructed in and through language, that 'sex' is also constructed and materialised, and that there is nothing natural about it". OGER. Claire. "Judith Butler, The Power of Words. Politics of the Performative". In Words. The languages of politics. [Online]. Published online July 1, 2008. Accessed June 3, 2020. Available at: <http://journals.openedition.org/mots/736>.

⁸¹ COLLIN. Françoise. VILAINE. Anne-Marie (de). "The same thing and the differences". In Les Cahiers du GRIF. N° 28. 1983. Pp. 7 - 16.

⁸² Already partially cited in the section "Women and Freemasonry: a late recognition".

⁸³ ARVELLE. Joël. Being a Freemason in Belgium. 80 answers to the questions you may have. Edited by J. Bonivert and J.-M. Dubray. Belgium. 1989. P° 30.

⁸⁴ BRYON-PORTET. Céline. KELLER. Daniel. The Masonic Utopia. Improving man and society. Éditions Dervy. Paris. 2015. Pp. 177 - 180.

particular family that is the great human family. Its meaning here takes on a universal dimension⁸⁵.

By analysing and comparing the three chosen extracts, a form of observation, a common characteristic or a recurrent interpretation can be discerned through these passages: that of a universality of fraternity, or of a universal fraternity⁸⁶. Each of these authors combines universality with fraternity, and vice versa. A kind of mutual co-construction and co-legitimation that would ineluctably link them to each other, according to an ideological aim, like two sides of the same coin. In other words, it is because Freemasonry aspires to universality that it encourages and initiates its members to fraternity. And it is because it promotes and favours fraternity, without distinction of a spiritual (psyche, philosophy, etc.) or material (social class, etc.) nature, that it encourages universality and the erasure of individual singularities, to the benefit of a "shared utopia" which would bring humanity together towards a "common future". Taking up the definition of universality given by Françoise Collin in her article, the latter indicates that 'universalism does indeed imply an erosion of differences⁸⁷', but it is in no way constitutive of identity. Universalism claims to transcend personal specificities in order to unite humanity around a 'joint' or 'unique' property, the fact of being human. However, such a position raises various questions.

Firstly, can we not say that universalism leads to a kind of homogenisation of identities, and thus to a restrictive normalisation of thought and an erasure of what is socio-situated? As denounced by the black feminist Bell Hooks in her book *Am I not a woman? Black Women and Feminism* (1982)⁸⁸. The generic and universalising label of 'woman' has led to an invisibilisation and misunderstanding of feminine diversities, and above all of the intersecting⁸⁹ and intertwined relations of power and domination to which ethnicised women are subjected.

Secondly, doesn't universalizing simply mean creating a single self-centered category, the "human category", which could lead to the exclusion of what is not human (nature, animals, etc.)? As ecofeminists, for example, point out the anthropocentrism, androcentrism and occidentalocentrism, present and latent, in hegemonic Western thinking⁹⁰. The French philosopher Elsa Dorlin also pointed out this ideological and cultural imperialism in her book *Sex, race,*

⁸⁵ AIMÉ.Magali. "Silence, discretion, secret.". In *Femme et franc-maçonne. Paroles d'apprenties, silences de compagnonnes*. Éditions Dervy. France. 2012. Pp. 113 - 114.

⁸⁶ "The whole human race is but one family scattered over the face of the earth. All peoples are brothers and must love each other as such. FENELON. *The Adventures of Telemachus*. Book IX.

⁸⁷ COLLIN. Françoise. "Deconstruction / destruction of gender relations". In *Sens Public. Revue électronique internationale*. [On-line]. Published in October 2003. Accessed June 3, 2020. Available at: http://www.sens-public.org/article.php3?id_article=43.

⁸⁸ HOOKS. Bell. *Am I not a woman? Black women and feminism*. Éditions Cambourakis. Coll. "Sorcières". Paris. [1982] 2018. 295 pages.

⁸⁹ CRENSHAW. Kimberlé Williams. "Mapping the margins: intersectionality, identity politics and violence against women of colour. In *Cahiers du Genre*. Vol. 39. N° 2. 2005. Pp. 51 - 82.

⁹⁰ The philosopher and theorist Jeanne Burgart Goutal studied the philosophical construction and cultural roots of male domination, exercised over both women and nature. A matrix of common domination, against which ecofeminism militates, which she developed by taking up Jacques Derrida's concept of carno-phallogocentrism. DERRIDA. Jacques. *The Animal I Am*. Galilée. Paris. 2006. 218 pages.

class. PFor an epistemology of domination (2009)⁹¹. "Legal, economic, religious and family structures are treated as phenomena to be analysed in terms of the West; it is here that ethnocentric universality manifests itself [...]. The humanist and scientific discourse carries a legitimating imperative⁹².

Thirdly, isn't the Masonic universalist utopia, because of its vocation to esoteric spirituality and symbolic initiation, similar to a deliberately elitist "abstract theorisation⁹³"? Kristie Dotson, a black American feminist philosopher, in explaining the concept, takes up Barbara Christian's formulations on this subject. Kristie Dotson attacks literary theory by speaking of egocentric theorising, the mystification of language, or "the oversimplification of a complex world [...]. A tendency to want to make the world less complex by organising it according to a principle, by determining it through an idea that is in fact a (socio-situated) ideal. Seeking to understand a complex world by organising it around certain axes is certainly a way of theorising⁹⁴. If these accusations initially relate to the literary field, this predominance of ideas over the concrete and the real, as well as the coded language that is used to define and share it, can nevertheless resonate with the speculative tools put in place by Freemasonry.

Finally, Françoise Gaspard, a French feminist sociologist and politician, discusses in her article "From patriarchy to fratriarchy. Parity as a new horizon of feminism(2011)⁹⁵", the resurgence of patriarchy, endangered by the feminist movements of recent years, under the name of fratriarchy. She emphasises that women are now present everywhere, but that equality, equity and parity between the sexes have not yet been achieved. She thus highlights fraternity, or fratriarchy, as a new tool for gender imbalance, in favour of masculinities: 'Power is not only patriarchal in its origins, but also and perhaps above all fratriarchal [...]. Fraternity has functioned - and continues to do so - as a kind of 'cache-sexe', in the same way that the word 'man' in the motto of the rights of 1789 initially concerned only men, and them alone. In the public arena, and a fortiori in politics, women are not men, and sisters are not brothers [...]. The universal has long ignored women. To refuse parity is to refuse to take into consideration society as history has produced it⁹⁶. This denunciation of a disguised patriarchy seems, however, *a fortiori*, not to correspond to the "fraternal" ideal advocated by the Masonic utopia. One may still wonder, however, why lodges are still predominantly reserved for men⁹⁷? Is it because there are fewer female Freemasons?

CONCLUSION

⁹¹ DORLIN. Elsa. *Sex, race, class. For an epistemology of domination*. Presses universitaires de France. France. 2009. 313 pages.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ DOTSON. Kristie. "Me, a Black Feminist: Who do I think I am? In *Diogenes*. Vol. 235-236. N° 3-4. 2011. Pp. 109 - 129.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁹⁵ GASPARD. Françoise. "From patriarchy to fratriarchy. Parity as a new horizon of feminism". In *Cahiers du Genre*. N° 2. 2011. Pp. 135 - 136.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Original passage: "Most lodges in the world are still reserved for the brethren". REVERSE. Cécile. *The long march of the Freemasons*. France, Great Britain, United States. Éditions Dervy. Paris. 2018. P° 121.

In an interview with the Grand Master of the Grand Orient of Belgium, Henry Charpentier, the journalist Soraya Ghali wrote in 2018 that 'the percentage of women did not exceed 30% of the membership of Belgian Freemasonry⁹⁸'. She adds that women's Freemasonry mainly developed in the 1970s and 1980s, but that "since 1990/2000, this missionary spirit has diminished". So how can we explain this imbalance, or even this numerical loss of momentum, when parity is becoming more and more widespread in the secular world? Why are women still in the minority in this institution, even though they are the majority in the world's population? Is it a matter of taste? Preference? Of interest? Similarly, why in Masonic knowledge books, those consulted in any case, do a majority of authors still refer to the generic masculine to define universalism and fraternity? Why is there so much reluctance to use inclusive writing and gender diversity?

Although there is no monolithic explanation to these questions, and everyone is free to (re)interpret and understand these elements, we can nevertheless put forward some tentative answers. Some Freemasons consider gender equality to be effective since the creation of mixed and female lodges in Masonry. Others consider that since women's rights have been acquired, the right to the pill and the right to abortion for example, it is no longer necessary to make feminist militancy a priority and to wish for more prerogatives. Finally, some women Freemasons, such as Marie-Thérèse Besson⁹⁹ and Marie-Claude Kervella-Boux¹⁰⁰, claim, on the contrary, their "preference" for non-mixity and their membership of exclusively women's lodges. They argue that "having a specifically female perspective" would allow them to obtain a differentiated approach, to advance further in their identity and initiation process, and "to reflect among themselves on problems that concern them [...]".

Resistance and opinions, both feminine and masculine, which (hypothetically) have their roots in the utopia, the representation or the very meaning of what constitutes Freemasonry in the eyes of the various Freemasons. In the words of the various Freemasons: "[...] a means of establishing true Friendship among People who should have remained perpetually Distant¹⁰¹", "a way of connecting to oneself, to others and to the world¹⁰²" or "a tuning of individual vibrations into an all-embracing collective harmony¹⁰³". A universalism or rather a universality which, as we have already discussed, eclipses personal specificities - and therefore the inequa-

⁹⁸ GHALI. Soraya. "Women and Freemasonry: why the brothers tear each other apart". In Levif.be. [Online]. Published on 15 December 2028. Accessed April 6, 2021. Available at: https://www.levif.be/actualite/belgique/femmes-et-franc-maconnerie-pourquoi-les-freres-se-dechirent/article-normal-1060117.html?cookie_check=1617182795#.

⁹⁹ Grand Mistress of the Feminine Grand Lodge of France in 2016. SAINT-JULLIAN. Elise. "Women and Freemasonry: women's or feminist lodges?". In Informations.tv5monde.com. [Online]. Published 28 December 2016. Accessed 6 April 2021. Available at: <https://information.tv5monde.com/terriennes/femmes-et-franc-maconnerie-des-loges-feminines-ou-feministes-145843>.

¹⁰⁰ Grand Mistress of the Grand Lodge of France in 2019. FROELIG. Caroline. "Freemasonry : "The objective is not to make friends and a network" for Marie-Claude Kervella-Boux ". In Midilibre.fr. [Online]. Published 8 March 2019. Accessed 6 April 2021. Available from: <https://www.midilibre.fr/2019/03/08/franc-maconnerie-lobjectif-nest-pas-de-se-faire-des-amis-et-un-reseau-pour-marie-claude-kervella-boux,8056708.php>.

¹⁰¹ NAUDON. Paul. General history of Freemasonry. Éditions Charles Moreau. Pantin. 2004. P° 37.

¹⁰² BRYON-PORTET. Céline. "Freemasonry 2.0. Adaptations and denaturations of a ritual culture in the context of participatory platforms ". In Réseaux. Vol. 172. N° 2. 2012. Pp. 216 - 239.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

lities of gender, class, race (etc.) which would be attached to them - in order to question "Humanity" and to turn together towards an "ideal becoming". Thus, the grand master of Droit Humain, Madeleine Postal, categorically refuses the feminisation of her "title", arguing that Droit Humain supports "the demands for women's rights". But for all that, Freemasons "prefer to have a societal commission", that they are "aware that women are discriminated against in terms of salaries, that they suffer violence, but in our Masonic functioning, we do not make the difference between men and women. We say that the condition of women is that of humanity"¹⁰⁴.

To answer the main thread of this analysis, is Freemasonry a gendered utopia? If approached from a gender perspective, the answer is probably yes. Although depending on sensitivities and ideologies, experiences and socio-situated points of view, conceptual and methodological tools, this attempt at an answer, far from being the only one, will be nuanced and diversified in the image of the abundant, multiple and complex human identity. Moreover, the gender perspective, or even gender perspectives, is only one of many. A tool with a historical past and a heavy social burden (instrument of militancy, denunciation, claim, inclusion, etc.) that must, like other approaches, be recontextualised, questioned, criticised, adapted and reinvented. In sum, Freemasonry and gender thinking are not so far apart, both aiming at a balance, which may be considered utopian, and creative participation in a better society.

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¹⁰⁴ SAINT-JULLIAN. Elise. "Women and Freemasonry: women's lodges or feminist lodges? In Informations.tv5-monde.com. [Online]. Published 28 December 2016. Accessed 6 April 2021. Available at: <https://information.tv5monde.com/terriennes/femmes-et-franc-maconnerie-des-loges-feminines-ou-feministes-145843>.

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