Women in Patriotic Societies: A Spanish Debate in a European Context (PREPRINT)

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Published in: *Society Women and Enlightened Charity in Spain. The Junta de Damas de Honor y Mérito, 1787-1823*, edited by Catherine M. Jaffee and Elisa Martín-Valdepeñas Yagüe, ISBN 9780807176801, Louisiana University Press, Baton Rouge, 2022, pp. 19-36.

A "Political Revolution"? Discussing Women's Access to Economic Societies

From its foundation in 1775 until 1786, the Royal Madrid Economic Society of Friends of the Country (Real Sociedad Económica Matritense de Amigos del País) discussed the subject of the admission of women to its ranks. This institution belonged to a wider movement that extended throughout virtually the whole of Europe and some parts of North and South America: voluntary associations that took the name of "economic," "patriotic" or "improving" societies, the first ones being the Honourable Society of Improvers in Scotland (1723) and the Dublin Society of Improvement (1731).[1] Although their specific aims, their composition (a varied mixture of nobles, clergymen, lawyers, landowners, and middle class) and their organization differed, they shared a common engagement in improving production, technological development, education and charity, and fostering practical knowledge in the regions where they emerged.

Economic societies (also called patriotic) in the Spanish empire —puzzingly absent from general overviews of these institutions— mushroomed from a relatively early date, starting with the Basque Society of Friends of the Country (Real Sociedad Bascongada de los Amigos del País), which developed in 1765 from an informal discussion group (*tertulia*) of nobles that had been meeting regularly since 1748.[2] The governments of King Carlos III (1759-1788) encouraged them and considered them indispensable organs of collaboration and channels of transmission for official reforms, which stimulated their multiplication in the last quarter of the century in most major peninsular cities (Madrid, 1775; Valencia, 1776) and many smaller towns, but also across the Spanish territories of the Atlantic and the Pacific (in Manila, 1781; Santiago de Cuba, 1787; followed in the 1790s by Lima, Havana, Quito, Mexico, among others). These societies participated in networks that connected European and American enlightened institutions (including also scientific, artistic and literary academies) through the exchange of correspondence, printed reports and other publications, and occasionally elected members affiliated to their foreign counterparts. Thorough all these channels, they created and cultivated a cosmopolitan sense of common purpose and emulation.

The Spanish economic societies displayed a considerable reformist activity, although not always at the level of their ambitions and varying widely from one to another of them.[3] In the field of education, they created modern establishments for the elite (like the Royal Patriotic Seminar of Bergara [Real Seminario Patriótico de Bergara]), promoted university chairs in botany, chemistry, mineralogy, and political economy, and founded and maintained popular schools. They struggled to improve agricultural and manufacturing production by debating reports, offering prizes for studies and practical experiments on crops, materials, farming or industrial techniques, and translating foreign works.[4] They also promoted modern philanthropic

ideas and initiatives against traditional notions and practices of Christian charity. Finally, at the government's request, they gathered statistical information about the regions where they operated.

All these activities draw a wide field of "patriotic" or "improving" activity which, in the language of eighteenth-century reformism, defined how the members of these institutions imagined themselves and their role in the reform and modernization of society. Conceived by the president of the *Consejo de Castilla* (Council of Castile) Pedro Rodríguez Campomanes as "political associations" that had to diffuse "love for King and Country" and collaborate with enlightened absolutism's own projects of control and development, some of these societies, however, came to understand their own nature as representative bodies with some political agency. In particular, the Basque Society portrayed itself, in its writings and its motto ("three make one") as a "body of a nation" that represented the three Basque provinces.[5] Some members of the economic societies considered their institutions as bodies representative of public opinion, understanding by that the voice of an elite legitimated by their "merit," their education and their advocacy to "the general interest" and "public utility."[6] They viewed their own activity as a selfless mission through which they could carry out their condition as "citizens," a term often used in their writings, with the same sense as that of "friends of the country" or "patriots." That is, they were individuals (implicitly, those educated and possessing a certain economic affluence) concerned with the "public good," who deemed themselves conscious of their social responsibilities and civic duties inherent to their good fortune, their position, and their education, and at the same time respectful subjects of an enlightened monarch. In his funeral eulogy upon the death of King Carlos III in 1788, Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos (1744-1811) credited among the king's successes his encouragement of the "patriotic bodies, models of political institutions,"

charged with overseeing "all objects of common profit," and praised the societies' members as "friends of the public good."[7]

These economic societies, like many other institutions engaging in enlightened sociability, set themselves up as examples of rationality and conviviality, not only by virtue of their aims, but also by their rules and modes of operation. Their criteria of admission were officially based on merit (although rank, influence and personal connections played a key role), and their working principles invoked open discussion, disinterested collaboration, and equality of relations among members, thus defining an enlightened public sphere (open in theory, yet implicitly selective and elitist) as the legitimate framework for the expression and formation of opinion. Nowhere was it explicitly declared in their statutes that their membership should be restricted to men, although that was an implicit understanding. In fact, the question of women's participation was never posed in other European patriotic societies.

This symbolic imaginary is crucial to understand why the debate over the admission of women to the Economic Society of Madrid assumed such a resonance and was seen by contemporaries as a turning point, opening up no less than a "political revolution," in Jovellanos's words. The debate began right after the creation of the Society in 1775. Manuel José Marín, one of the founding members and a courtier (*ayuda de cámara*) at the service of King Carlos III, delivered at the meeting of October 28, 1775, a speech defending women's admission; Pedro José Rodríguez Campomanes and Luis de Imbille would follow. The discussion was then interrupted for unknown reasons in 1776. It seems that the society —with the possible support of the government and perhaps the king himself— was inclined to open its doors to women, but public opinion did not endorse this view. The opportunity to reopen the question came in 1786, after the young noblewoman María Isidra Quintina de Guzmán, daughter of the count and

countess of Oñate, a courtier of King Carlos III and a lady-in-waiting of Princess of Asturias, María Luisa de Parma, was awarded on the king's initiative a doctorate and an honorary chair at the University of Alcalá, and subsequently admitted to the Real Academia Española (Spanish Royal Academy in 1785) and to the Basque and the Madrid Societies of Friends of the Country (1786). She would be shortly followed in the latter by the Countess-Duchess of Benavente, a powerful and cultivated aristocrat, patron of artists and intellectuals. They had been preceded in 1782 by two women who accessed two provincial societies: Josefa Amar, admitted into the Aragonese Society and María Manuela de Moctezuma y Carvajal, Marquise of Cerralbo y Almarza, who joined that of Ciudad Rodrigo.[8]

All this fit into a general European trend to admit a few "exceptional" women to literary, scientific and artistic institutions from which they were generally excluded. Italian literary academies of the Arcadia opened their doors to a certain number of female members: in the case of the Roman academy, a total of seventy-four women (among them, a few foreign queens and aristocrats) out of 2,419 designations from its foundation in 1690 to 1728.[9] Artistic academies incorporated a few: the Paris Academy, only Rosalba Carriera, Elizabeth Vigée-Lebrun (official painter to Queen Marie Antoinette) and Adélaïde Labille-Guiard; the British Royal Academy, Mary Moser and Angelica Kauffmann; the Spanish Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando (Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando) admitted thirty-four women (about 8% of admissions) from 1752 to 1808.[10] Also, French provincial academies admitted into their ranks a small number of female writers and intellectuals, a number which rose in the 1780s.[11] Scientific academies —with the exception of the Accademia delle scienze dell'Istituto di Bologna, (Academy of Sciences of the Institute of Bologna), of which Laura Bassi and Maria Gaetana Agnesi became members in 1732 and 1748 respectively— were a much less welcoming

space: the Académie des Sciences (French Academy of Sciences) did not admit any women during the eighteenth century, and Émilie du Châtelet, in spite of having become the first foreign woman invited to the Bologna Istituto, had to maneuver her relations with the Paris academy as an outsider, using the resources due to her rank.[12] The case of Princess Ekaterina Dashkova, a close friend to Empress Catherine II, president from 1783 of the Imperial Academy of Sciences of Saint Petersburg and the Imperial Academy of the Russian language, admitted to the Economic Society of St. Petersburg, founded in 1765, and first female member of the American Philosophical Society in 1789, was absolutely exceptional in Europe and frequently cited as such.[13] However, while the first female admissions to the Madrid Economic Society followed the logics often adopted by scientific, artistic and literary academies, which accepted women as exceptions in the implicitly male domains of art, sciences and letters, what was peculiar in this case is that the question was posed in more general terms, as the discourse of reform and improvement opened up wider -although certainly restricted- options for women's social and intellectual activism.

Those members of the Madrid Society who expressed their opinion on women's admission during the second stage of the discussion in 1786 included prestigious and well connected names: the enlightened jurist Gaspar Melchor de Jovellanos, the professor Ignacio López de Ayala, the business man Francisco de Cabarrús, and the erudite Josefa Amar (*Discurso en defensa del talento de las mujeres, y de su aptitud para el gobierno, y otros cargos en que se emplean los hombres* [Discourse in Defense of the Talents of Women, and their Aptitude for Government and Other Positions in which Men are Employed]). The debate went far beyond the circle of the Madrid Society to reach Spanish, and to a certain extent European, public opinion: three of the essays were published in the *Memorial literario, instructivo y curioso de la Corte de*

Madrid[14] and further advertised in the *Mercurio histórico-político*, periodicals that had subscribers not only in peninsular Spain but also in the Canary Islands, North Africa, Spanish America and the United States.[15] Moreover, Cabarrús's essay was translated into French in the *Mercure de France* on March 24, 1787, and Amar's twice into Italian, in Rome (1789) and Bologna (1810).[16]

The real question under discussion was not only whether a limited number of ladies should form part of the institution and participate in its activities, but, more generally, what were the social roles and responsibilities to be undertaken by women within Enlightenment reformist projects and imaginary, and what were, ultimately, the intellectual and moral capacities of their sex. The latter issue had been passionately discussed decades earlier, starting with the publication of the *Defense of Women* (Defensa de las mujeres) by the enlightened Benedictine monk Benito Jerónimo Feijoo in 1726.[17] Feijoo, drawing on the long tradition of the European *querelle des femmes* and on rationalist feminism of the seventeenth century, affirmed the intellectual and moral equality between the sexes ("the Soul is neither male nor female") and women's capacity for arms, letters, and government. His text set off a polemical exchange that would explicitly last until 1750, but whose reverberations outreached that date, not only in peninsular Spain, but also across the Atlantic, in Spanish America, where Feijoo was a revered author (most particularly in New Spain but also in Peru), and in other countries, where his essay became known through translations into French, English, Italian, and Portuguese.

During the second half of the century, explicit vindications of men's natural superiority over women, of the type Feijoo's antagonists had brandished, became unfashionable in enlightened public discourse and were gradually replaced by a subtler notion of "complementarity" between the sexes, emphasizing their "naturally" differing qualities that

suited a division of social spaces and functions: men were assigned a particular responsibility in the public sphere, while to women fell the duty to care for the well-being of the family and the moral education of their children.[18] However, the notion that reason, a quality distinctive to the human species, belonged to both sexes did not completely fade away but continued to nourish throughout the century a discourse of intellectual equality. Thus, the debate over women's admission to the Economic Society did not oppose enlightened reformers versus traditional misogynists, but more interestingly represents a fissure among the enlightened spirits themselves. Close friends with strong intellectual affinities, like Cabarrús and Jovellanos, who shared the values and rhetoric of reformism in terms of "reason," "utility," and "progress," sharply diverged regarding the role that women should play in an enlightened society.

This debate therefore embodied the tension between two opposing positions, both rooted in the values and pragmatic concerns of enlightened reformism. On one side was the "Rousseauist" discourse that attributed to women, in the name of Enlightenment, a social and civic responsibility defined exclusively in function of their domestic role (presented in turn as the consequence of their particular physical, moral, and sentimental nature), and that envisioned with suspicion other forms of female participation in social spaces.[19] On the other side were the different arguments that legitimated for women other forms of participation in reformist enterprises and thus presented their access to the Economic Society as an unavoidable requirement of the Enlightenment, while setting diverging limits for their participation. These disagreements do not mirror a division between reformers and representatives of a nascent liberalism that would question in later years the bases of political absolutism and the society of orders, but cut across established notions of what are "moderate" and "radical" Enlightenments. Bold affirmations of gender equality are found between female (and some male) writers who

were in other aspects representatives of moderate positions in social and political issues, while other authors with more daring ideas about the social contract shared Rousseauist notions of male and female separate spheres. In this sense, the pragmatic, reforming spirit usually attributed to the Spanish Enlightenment (although in fact characteristic too of the Enlightenment in other territories, from Naples to Austria, from Scotland to Peru) can be seen not as a shortcoming, but as an opportunity for women to engage on improvement activities that expanded in practice what could be understood as female domains.

A Space for Women as Reformers

Brandishing the rationalist motto that several male and female authors had used before in Spain and the rest of Europe and that Feijoo had popularized, Manuel José Marín affirmed that "the understanding has no sex and the soul is not differentiated like the body" (los entendimientos no tienen sexo, ni las almas se diferencian como los cuerpos).[20] He and other members of the Society were in favor of women's admission, but differed regarding the specific formulas they proposed for it: some asked for their financial contribution, which others like Marín considered inappropriate; a few envisaged their normal integration into the Society, while others suggested that they be organized into a separate body or that they just be listed as honorific members. For Marín, who mentioned as a precedent individual admissions of women to the Real Academia de Bellas Artes de San Fernando —where they never took part in regular meetings—, the mere idea that women would attend the sessions, together with men or even on their own, was "ridiculous or extravagant."[21] However, he —like other members and, more generally, Enlightened reformers—- shared a utilitarian perspective stressing the benefits that

would derive from the participation of women and sought to promote their influence outside the strictly domestic circle, in the wider arena of reformist activities. By taking part in the endeavors and concerns of the patriotic societies, they argued, ladies would set an example for women of their class to abandon “frivolous” feminine pursuits and adopt instructive, useful, and morally worthy habits, such as formative reading, the education of children, and rational household management, virtues they would spread to less affluent women through their educational and charitable activities.

In this line, Campomanes underlined the prospective utility of the ladies becoming involved in the running of the Escuelas Patrióticas (popular schools for working class girls) and suggested that female teachers of those schools were admitted, just as selected male members of the guilds, in a special class that would not be charged membership fees.[22] He concluded that women’s admission was “not only fair, but convenient and necessary.” In April 1776, Luis de Imbille agreed with him about incorporating ladies who would seek the honor of distinguishing as public benefactors, but also —seeking further involvement of public opinion— women who proved to have made practical contributions to technical improvement from their homes.[23]

Ten years later, in his speech delivered on March 27, 1786, Jovellanos also defended women’s admission and rejected making it merely honorary and denying them access to the common meetings.[24] He was not shocked by the improbable circumstance that they might attend occasionally, in which case —he argued— the desire to please them would stimulate male members of the Society in their patriotic efforts, but he clearly expected that decorum would deter them from frequenting the sessions.

According to these speeches and what they suggest about the opinions of other members of the Society who did not express their position publicly, most of them seemed to not only

tolerate, but actively require the participation of educated and respectable ladies in their shared social —and implicitly, political— mission. This was considered as a right that they should be accorded as rational beings, and at the same time legitimized on the grounds of their potential contribution to the general interest; more specifically, in different types of activities oriented towards social "improvement," including popular education, philanthropy, and promotion of technical advances in textile production. The idea that women could contribute to the betterment of society through specific actions was, indeed, embedded in the pragmatic spirit of the Enlightenment.[25] As Elena Serrano has shown, this notion that they should participate in the production and circulation of practical, "useful knowledge" helped to justify a wide variety of empiric and intellectual, including scientific, endeavours.[26] It facilitated the activities of the future Ladies Section of the Madrid Economic Society and also, in other European and American contexts, it fostered female participation in initiatives concerning agronomic experiments, economic discussions and patriotic activism, from French physiocratic debates to philanthropic societies with an implicit political agenda in the early American republic. Thus, a notion of female citizenship not restricted to the domestic circle was defined within the boundaries of enlightened discourses and reformist practices. The shared reluctance to admit the mixing of the sexes shows that this notion was generally based on the idea of their complementary but distinctive roles and social spaces; however, these did not correspond in practice to a clean-cut division between a "public" and a "private" sphere, but constituted more flexibles, overlapping areas of activity.

Reformulationg Women's Exclusion

Although those who publicly expressed their view on this issue seem to have accepted that women's admission was necessary or even desirable, for others the only way that women should be "citizens" and collaborate with the objectives of enlightened reformism was through their domestic duties as wives and mothers, redefined in this period all over Europe as more demanding and politically charged. In the same year of 1786, the famous physician Jaime Bonells reminded women of the civic implications of those duties by accusing those who did not breastfeed their babies of being "in league against the public good."[27]

The fact that liberal and even progressive views on economic, social, and religious issues could go hand-in-hand with a strict gendered division of "public" and "private" spheres is illustrated by the arguments of Francisco de Cabarrús (1752-1810), a financier of French origin established in Spain, whose works and biographical trajectory are full of paradoxes. He represents in some respects the most liberal and anticlerical facet of the late Enlightenment in Spain, profoundly influenced by Rousseau, even as he served the financial institutions of Bourbon absolutism and obtained a noble title.[28] The only member of the Madrid Economic Society to raise his voice publicly against the admission of women, he might represent an opinion shared by a number of others.[29] In his speech delivered on February 18, 1786, Cabarrús emphasized the exceptional character of the new admissions, which did not justify opening the door to their sex: "let us close the door forever to their sex and not allow the advantages of such an example to conceal its drawbacks by making it a precedent" (cerremos para siempre la puerta a todo su sexo y no nos dejemos ocultar por las ventajas de un ejemplo los inconvenientes de una ley).[30] He invoked "the order as old as the world, that throughout all time and in all places has excluded women from public deliberations" (el orden, tan antiguo como el mundo, que siempre y en todas partes las ha excluido de las deliberaciones públicas), and insisted on the

incompatibility between women's public activities and their family duties: sustaining the sentimental and moral foundations of the home, full of political resonances.[31]

His arguments, strongly indebted to Rousseau, are similar to those that would be deployed years later by French revolutionaries opposed to granting the new right of citizenship to women. Among others, André Amar, Pierre-Gaspar Chaumette, and Louis-Marie Prudhomme exhorted women to renounce political activity and devote themselves to domestic life, understood as a civil obligation.[32] A few years before the revolution, in 1787, Maximilien de Robespierre, then a young lawyer, might have read Cabarrús's essay in the French translation while he was preparing his reply to Louise de Kéralio's *discours de reception* to the Arras Academy, that would be read in the public session of April 18.[33] However, although he shared Cabarrús's idea of women's complementary qualities and roles in relation to men, he strongly argued for their right to develop their intellect as rational beings and against the "prejudice" of denying them admission to the academies.

Equality as the cornerstone of progress

Other participants in the debate, most notably Josefa Amar and Ignacio López de Ayala, rather than relying on pragmatic criteria of utility, called on a theoretical concept of "reason" and also on a moral sentiment of "justice." For them, the admission of women to the Society was the only possible result of admitting that women, just like men, were rational beings with civic duties towards the public good. Opposing Cabarrús, who had invoked in his favor immemorial tradition and the immutable laws of nature, the defenders of the admission of women admitted

that this action, if it were accepted, would constitute a significant novelty and an important rupture with the past.

“It’s about nothing less than making women the equals of men, about giving them a place in their [the male] assemblies and conferring with them on important topics, something that seems outside the established order and in itself extravagant” (no se trata de menos que de igualar a las mujeres con los hombres, de darles asiento en sus juntas y de conferir con ellas materias de gravedad, cosa que parece fuera del orden, y aun disparatada), wrote Josefa Amar, supported by her friend Juan Antonio Hernández de Larrea, censor of the Aragonese Economic Society, who added his own comment: “opposing the membership of women in ‘Economic Societies,’ in my view, is to seek to strip them of their right of citizenship” (oponerse a que [las mujeres] sean Individuos de las Sociedades económicas, que a mi ver es lo mismo que quererlas despojar del derecho de ciudadano).[34] Her essay —the longest and most exhaustive by far—, sent from Zaragoza and read during the meeting of June 24, 1786, adds a different perspective to the others: that of being the only one written by a woman, acutely self-conscious of her direct and specific implication in the question under debate.[35] She was the first Spanish woman to have been admitted to one of the patriotic societies, that of Aragón (Real Sociedad Económica Aragonesa de Amigos del País), in 1782, the same year that Mme de Bourdieu had been elected to the Nîmes academy and Fanny Beaurnhais to that of Lyon, and that Mme de Genlis had been approached by d’Alembert with a proposal to become the first woman in the French Academy (Académie française).[36] On the grounds of her already established reputation as an erudite translator and member of an economic society, Amar assumed the voice of her sex in a debate whose theoretical and practical extent she foresaw. She used to her advantage the discourse of

Enlightenment which, unlike traditional misogynist discourse, rejected the idea of women's inferiority, but fell short of assuming the consequences of admitting their intellectual equality.

For Josefa Amar, gender equality is not a purely rhetorical idea. The fact that it was not fully recognized in a century of Enlightenment is for her morally inexcusable and painful. She denies that women have in "civilized" societies their proper role, opposed to the "oppression" and "brutality" they suffered, according to common Enlightenment discourse, in primitive societies of the past and in non-European societies of the present. On the contrary, she characterizes their state as one of "dependence," a subtler but equally unacceptable form of inequality. Conscious that women "were banned from prizes and rewards," denied "the majesty of the scepter, the gravity of the toga, and military trophies" ([l]a majestad del cetro, la gravedad de la toga, y los trofeos militares) which were reserved to men, and having experienced herself those limitations, Josefa Amar stressed that economic societies themselves were an innovation, based on the effort to modernize Spain and a model of what a modern and enlightened society should be. Therefore, they should not become, as were other more traditional institutions such as the church and the universities, a "new sanctuary" or a "wall of separation," but open their doors to women as a sign of progress.[37]

Ignacio López de Ayala, professor of the newly established Reales Estudios de San Isidro (Royal School of San Isidro), was the last member of the Madrid Society to deliver his speech, on September 2, 1786. He framed it as a philosophical dissertation on the natural equality of the sexes, taking as a point of departure the unity of the human species founded on the common attribute of reason. His arguments are close to the points of view that would be developed several years later by Antoine-Nicolas Caritat de Condorcet in several discourses: *On the Admission of Women to the Rights of Citizenship* (1790, *Sur l'admission des femmes au droit de cité*), and

Sketch for a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind (1795, *Esquisse d'un tableau sur les progrès de l'esprit humain*), among others. But they also bear resemblance to the disagreement expressed decades earlier by d'Alembert in his *Letter from Mr. D'Alembert to Mr. J.J. Rousseau* (1759, *Lettre de M. d'Alembert à M. Rousseau*), where he accused Rousseau of disguising the oppression of women as nature's law in Rousseau's response to d'Alembert's article on theater in Geneva published in the *Encyclopédie*.

According to López de Ayala, gender equality cannot be questioned in an "enlightened century" and even less so within an institution that pretends to be representative and favorable to the Enlightenment. Recognizing women's equality and putting it into practice in the social order constitutes a necessary sign of progress: "In this century, and especially in this place, it cannot be disputed that women are capable of all the learning and almost all the work of men" (En este siglo, y mucho menos en este sitio, no debe disputarse que la mujer es capaz de toda instrucción y de casi todos los trabajos de los hombres).[38] He argued: "Let us give this example of reason to the nations of Europe. All over the continent, philosophy is fermenting and its time has come. The world is new" (Demos este ejemplo de razón a las naciones de Europa. En toda ella fermenta la filosofía y ha llegado su tiempo. El mundo es nuevo).[39]

The Enlightenment Legacy

On August 27, 1787, a Royal Order (Real Orden) sanctioned women's admission to the Madrid Economic Society, stipulating that it should take the form of a Ladies' Section (Junta de Honor y Mérito or Junta de Damas), annexed to the Economic Society and in charge of works "proper to their sex," defined as education and the reform of luxury. The Junta was composed

initially of sixteen ladies of the highest nobility designated by a commision of male members of the Economic Society. Once they started their activities in October of that year, the ladies proposed to incorporate other associates: the first of them, Josefa Amar, in recognition for her reputation and her brilliant intervention in the debate. In her thank-you speech, she remarked that King Carlos III's decision would serve as an example in Europe, a comment that could not help but flatter the king of Spain and former king of Naples, who aspired to appear as an enlightened ruler and a friend of progress.[40]

Over the course of the following years, the Junta de Damas assumed, upon the request of the Madrid Economic Society or on its own initiative, other areas of competence in matters of education and charity: it took over the management of the four professional schools for poor girls that were operating in Madrid (Escuelas Patrióticas); the welfare of women in prison (Galera); the foundling hospital (Inclusa); and an institution charged with furnishing the raw materials for textile workers (Montepío de Hilazas). Elena Serrano and Elisa Martín-Valdepeñas have convincingly shown that in all these tasks they also carried out an often underestimated scientific and technological activity in the form of practical experiments (about dying textiles, ventilation systems and attempts at artificial feeding for babies) and translation and dissemination of technical novelties.[41] They justified their claims by appealing to the interests of reform (reducing mortality, promoting useful knowledge and productive labor) shared by male members of the Economic Society, while stressing that their condition as women and mothers gave them a particular responsibility to undertake these specific tasks.

The relations between the Junta de Damas and the Madrid Economic Society were never easy. The Royal Order specified that the Junta should be affiliated to the latter as a subordinate organization. In this spirit, the statutes elaborated by a commission of male members of the

Society and approved by the King in 1794 established that the Society should supervise the Junta's activities, approve their annual report and proposals for new admissions, intervene in their dealings with exterior organizations, have a censor examine the essays and reports written by the members, and finally ensure a protocol of precedence in official ceremonies. However, in practice the Junta functioned autonomously and continuously pushed back against the interference of the Society in their activities and defended their character as an independent body, certainly affiliated, but not subordinated to the Madrid Economic Society; its first president, the Duchess of Osuna, and secretary, the Countess of Montijo, together with some of its most prominent members, like the Marquise of Fuerte-Híjar, who were particularly articulate and outspoken in this respect, frequently clashed with the representatives of the Economic Society.[42]

While most economic societies never admitted women or limited them to individual and honorific admissions, a number of societies created their own women's sections at the end of the eighteenth century or throughout the nineteenth century (Murcia, Granada, Jaén, Cádiz, León, Las Palmas). Like in Madrid, they were assigned functions regarded as a prolongation into the social sphere of women's domestic duties: responsibilities related to education and charity, especially those that implied other women (prisoners and poor) or children (abandoned infants). Although they were in theory submitted to the supervision and control of the masculine societies, they jealously preserved what they considered their own sphere of activity and responsibility. In Cádiz, like in Madrid, their conflicts with the economic societies or with local governments regarding questions of competences and protocol reveal the independence with which they assumed a space of power that they considered their own.[43]

Through their integration into the patriotic societies, elite enlightened women obtained social recognition and represented themselves as active subjects in the country's reform, exercising a particular type of "public representation," as the Countess of Montijo, secretary of the Junta, wrote in a letter to King Carlos IV.[44] The ladies thus adopted reformist rhetoric that assigned to the elites the right and privilege to act as "friends of the country" by taking part in enlightened public opinion and spurring reforms that set in motion the reformist ideal: an ordered, productive society, aligned with the more advanced countries in Europe and presided over by an enlightened monarch and a benevolent and cultivated ruling class. In the symbolic and practical realization of their social engagements, elite women defended their status as "citizens," justified either on the grounds of their intellectual equality in relation to men, or, more often, by interpreting in their favor the discourse that extolled their different and complementary qualities.

The Spanish debate on women's admission to the patriotic societies was connected, to a larger extent than has been acknowledged up to now, to European discussions about the nature of gender difference, women's education and their access to public spaces. Taking place in a period when the country was vindicating its place in European modernity, the participants in this polemic were aware that these were passionately discussed issues internationally. They used arguments taken from —either unconsciously or deliberately— a common pool of Enlightenment discourses and brandished the examples of women admitted into literary, scientific, and artistic societies in other countries to call for emulation. But they also —as the examples of Josefa Amar and Ignacio López de Ayala make clear— claimed that Spain could set an even more advanced example and become the model to be imitated, by making women's admission to enlightened institutions the rule instead of the exception.

The economic societies and their women's sections prolonged their existence beyond the Napoleonic invasion and the Peninsular War (Guerra de la Independencia), and into the liberal regime consolidated in the 1830s, after the failed experiments of the Cortes de Cádiz (Constitutional Convention, 1810-1814) and the Trienio Liberal (Liberal Triennium, 1820-1823). The Enlightenment's complex and paradoxical legacy, thus, lived on in the political cultures of liberalism, whose new definition of citizenship as the full possession of civil and political rights implicitly excluded women, while including them in their wider projects for the moral and sentimental foundation of the new social order.[45] In the transformed political context, one can discern, reshaped, the conflicting strands of Enlightenment thought that emerged during the debate on women's admission to the patriotic societies: its stress on reason as the key common denominator of humanity, but also its emphasis on the different, complementary natures and functions of the sexes; and its idea of progress as inextricably linked to improvement in the condition of women, albeit understood in widely differing ways—from equal access to education and public spaces, to empire over the family as the moral cornerstone of the public order.[46]

Translated by Catherine M. Jaffe.

The research for this essay has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program (Project CIRGEN, ERC Grant Agreement No 787015).

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Notes

[1] Stapelbroek and Marjanen, *The Rise of Economic Societies.*
[2] Trojani, *L'écriture de l'amitié*; Astigarraga Goenaga, *Los ilustrados vascos*.
[3] Franco Rubio, "Captar súbditos."
[4] Astigarraga Goenaga, "Economic Societies," and "Connecting with the Enlightenment."
[5] See Astigarraga Goenaga, *Los ilustrados vascos*, 49; Elorza Domínguez, *La ideología liberal*; Portillo Valdés, *Revolución de nación*.
[6] For public opinion in eighteenth-century Europe, see Habermas, *The Structural Transformation*; Chartier, *Les origines culturels*; Melton, *The Rise of the Public*. Recent revisions of the validity of Habermas' theories in the Hispanic context include Guerra and Lempérière, *Los espacios públicos*; Calvo Maturana, *Cuando manden los que obedecen*; Kitts, "Spain and Habermas.'"
[7] Jovellanos, "Elogio a Carlos III," 164 and 176.
[8] Demerson, Demerson and Aguilar Piñal, *Las Sociedades Económicas*, 44.
[9] Graziosi, "Arcadia femminile"; Dixon, "Women in Arcadia," 372.
[10] Chadwick, *Women, Art and Society*; Sheriff, *The Exceptional Woman*; Smith, *The Emerging Female Citizen*, 50-73. The Academia de San Carlos in Valencia admitted ten women during the eighteenth century.
[11] Including Antoniette Deshoulières (Académie d'Arles, 1680), Anne-Marie du Boccage (Rouen, 1756 and Lyon, 1758), Mme de Bourdieu (Nîmes, 1782), Fanny de Beaurnhais and Victoire Lallié (Lyon, 1782 and 1788), Marie Le Masson Le Golft, Louise Kéralio and Mlle de Chatellier (Arras, 1787 and 1789), Nicole Lepaute (Béziers, 1788). See also Iverson and Pieretti, "Toutes personnes," about women's participation in prizes.
[12] Cavazza, "Between Modesty and Spectacle"; Findlen, "Translating the New Science"; Petrovich, "Women and the Paris Academy"; Terral, "Gendered Spaces."
[13] Leckey, "Patriotism, Agronomy," 236-237. Josefa Amar cites her as a precedent, in Negrín Fajardo, *Ilustración y educación*, 168.
[14] Hereafter, *Memorial literario*.
[15] *Mercurio histórico-político*, June 1786: 188-189; July 1786: 282-283; September 1786: 87-88. The *Mercurio* sold slightly short of 2,000 copies in America from 1780 to March 1781, with nine distribution points, the most important Havana, followed by Guatemala, Lima, Cartagena, Panamá. Due to the high price overseas, the *Memorial literario* had only eight subscriptions outside peninsular Spain (including one each in New York, Havana, Veracruz and Mexico). Larriba, *Le public de la presse*, 191 and 193.
[16] *Mercure de France*, March 24, 1787: 176-186; Bolufer Peruga, "New Inflections"; Kitts, *The Debate*, chapter 5; Smith, *The Emerging Female Citizen*, chapter 3.
[17] Bolufer Peruga, "Neither Male, nor Female."
[18] Bolufer Peruga, "New Inflections."
[19] Steinbrügge, *The Moral Sex*.
[20] Negrín Fajardo, *Ilustración y educación*, 133-143 (p. 139).
[21] Negrín Fajardo, *Ilustración y educación*, 134 and 136.
[22] Negrín Fajardo, *Ilustración y educación*, 143-147.
[23] Negrín Fajardo, *Ilustración y educación*, 147-150.
[24] Negrín Fajardo, *Ilustración y educación*, 157-161.
[25] Koerner, "Women and Utility."
[26] Serrano Jerez, *Women and Science in the Spanish Enlightenment.*
[27] Bonells, *Perjuicios que acarrean*, 358.
[28] Elorza Domínguez, *La ideología liberal*, chapter 7.
[29] Negrín Fajardo, *Ilustración y educación*, 150-156.
[30] Negrín Fajardo, *Ilustración y educación*, 151.
[31] Negrín Fajardo, *Ilustración y educación*, 152.
[32] Badinter, *Paroles d'hommes.*
[33] Sepinwall, "Robespierre, Old Regime Feminist?"; *Mercure de France*, March 24, 1787: 176-186.
[34] *Memorial literario*, T. VIII, XXXII, August, 1786: 430-438 (p. 430).
[35] More about Amar's contribution in López-Cordón's essay in this volume.
[36] Schroeder, "Going Public," 377.
[37] Negrín Fajardo, *Ilustración y educación*, 169 and 170. Amar would later become the first woman admitted to a Royal Academy of Medicine, that of Barcelona, in November 22, 1790.

[38] Negrín Fajardo, *Ilustración y educación*, 176-183 (p. 176).
[39] Negrín Fajardo, *Ilustración y educación*, 178.
[40] *Diario de Madrid*, 26, January 26, 1788: 102.
[41] Serrano Jerez, "Chemistry in the City," and *Women and Science*; Martín-Valdepeñas Yagüe, "El eco del saber."
[42] Martín Valdepeñas Yagüe and Jaffe, *María Lorenza de los Ríos.*
[43] Espigado Tocino, "La Junta de Damas" and "La marquesa de Villafranca"; Martín Valdepeñas Yagüe, "Afrancesadas y patriotas."
[44] Fernández Quintanilla, *La mujer ilustrada*, 151; Demerson, *María Francisca de Sales*.
[45] Espigado Tocino, "Las mujeres en el nuevo orden"; Romeo Mateo, "Destinos de mujer"; Bolufer Peruga and Burguera López, "Género y modernidad."
[46] See Burguera López, *Las damas del liberalismo respetable*, "Mujeres y revolución liberal," and her essay in this volume.