



MARIANA DE PINEDA

Mariana de Pineda was born and died in Granada (1st September 1804 – 26th May 1831), one of the most beautiful cities in Europe.

The city, picturesque and exotic, seduced visitors through its contrasts. Elements that bore witness to the nascent *Andalusí* period, city walls, gateways, monuments, bridges spanning the Darro River and the commanding Alhambra Palace persist in the new urban order alongside architectonic constructions and styles that were developed in the Christian city from the 16th century onwards, and whose finest symbol of majesty was the Cathedral.

The childhood and early youth of Mariana de Pineda took place in one of the most discerning quarters; the *carrera del Darro*, next to the flamboyant *Plaza Nueva*, the nerve centre of the Granada socialites of the time.

Mariana was christened in the Church of Santa Ana. Following the break-up of her parents' relationship, she went to live with her father, Mariano de Pineda Ramírez. However, she would soon become orphaned and in 1806 appeared for the first time as registered in a stately home in *Carrera del Darro* along with who would be her tutor at the time: her uncle José de Pineda. Four years later, after her uncle's marriage, she was adopted by a family of former servants.

Against this backdrop, the first years of her life were marked by the Napoleonic invasion of the War of Independence. After victory and the proclamation of the eagerly awaited constitution in 1812, not long after, absolutism would be reinstated by the reigning monarch Fernando VII. This period entailed fierce repression of liberal groups for a period of six years. The struggle between liberalism and absolutism thus defined the life and death of Mariana.

In 1820, the proclamation of the liberal triennium, under the government of Rafael de Riego, unveiled a new constitutionalist stage that would brand the first years of her married life. Having become an enlightened and literate young woman, her marriage to the military serviceman Manuel de Peralta Valte in 1819 meant her first forays into political liberalism, while her family grew with the birth of her children José and Úrsula. The latter died shortly after her birth.

During these years of liberal euphoria, political gatherings were commonplace in cafeterias and bottle shops around Plaza Nueva, as well as in the drawing rooms of the most renowned liberal characters in Granada, rooms decorated with certain objects that can be seen in a corner of the room.

In 1821, Mariana resided with her family in the populous Magdalena neighbourhood, specifically in calle Recogidas. Her early widowhood in 1823 would mark the start of the so-called ominous decade: a tragic period characterised by strict absolutism under King Fernando and the harsh pursuit and execution of liberal groups, lodges or masonic assemblies, thus silencing the liberal press.

Under these circumstances, Mariana's militancy began, along with her participation in Granada's public and political life, infringing the prevailing social formalism and behavioural

patterns of her era. Once embroiled in conspirators' circles, she became an underhand liaison for exiled liberals, while paying visits to prisoners sentenced to death in prison, and even planning the breakout of her cousin Fernández Álvarez de Sotomayor.

From her relationship with José de la Peña Aguayo, her first biographer, a daughter named Luisa would be born.

In 1831, she moved to a comfortable courtyard residence in calle Águila, the current headquarters of the European Women's Foundation *Mariana de Pineda*. Coinciding with the preparation of tentative uprising of exiled liberal groups which under the command of General José María de Torrijos planned an offensive in the country against the tyranny of absolutism, Mariana took part in the design and manufacture of a tricolour flag embroidered with the words: freedom, equality and law.

The untimely discovery of the flag in her house on the part of law enforcement agents, meant her first period of house arrest, followed, upon an attempted escape, by her being sentenced to two months in the Santa María Egipcíaca Temple.

Condemned to be executed by garrote, she was transferred to the Baja Jail, where she was placed in the chapel for two days. Finally, the day of her execution arrived. On 26th May 1831, Mariana, with sublime fortitude, rode on a mule through the streets towards the gallows brimming with mourners located on the esplanade on the *Campo del Triunfo*, in front of the Elvira Gateway.

In this scene in the work *Heroine of Freedom* she is immortalised for not snitching on her accomplices in exchange for a pardon. Buried in the now disappeared Almengor Cemetery, a sole wooden cross was all that was placed on Mariana's grave. Thus, the tributes in her memory began.

In the year 1836, the City Council, now adherent to liberalism, appointed a commission entrusted with Mariana's disinterment and transfer via carriage of her remains in a wooden urn. A series of events were arranged to commemorate the anniversary of her death, duly inaugurating the Liberty Festival.

Alongside this, in the centre of what was then Bailen Square, a monument was raised (1839) in her honour that would be the product of National Sculpture Festival (1855) the winner of which forming the installation, alongside a range of cultural events. After a lengthy wait, this would be opened on 26th May 1873, within the backdrop of the First Spanish Republic.

In the place where the gallows stood, the modern-day *Libertad* Square, a cross was raised in her memory in 1840.

Following her death, she has also acquired noted limelight in cultural spheres, particularly in literature and artistic works that reflect the diverse roles granted to a fictional Mariana, the product of the era in which they were created. These range from the beautiful and decorative Mariana, encased in the patriarchal vision of traditional feminine values, to the romanticised popular heroine or even the embodiment of the spirit of republican freedom. From the poetic and passionate Mariana by Garcia Lorca, performed in several theatrical representations with stage scenery by Salvador Dalí, to the revolutionary and subversive inmate envisaged by Martín Recuerda. From biographical research and the historical character created by Antonina Rodrigo to the lyrical sequence composed by Antonio Carvajal. From the historic paintings of Isidoro Lozano, Vera and Calvo or Contreras to the portraits of Francisco Izquierdo or Hernández Quero. From the trendsetter Margarita Xirgú to the more classical Pepa Flores or Sara Baras.

With these cultural constructions and the celebration of diverse centenaries, events, awards and homages, the memory of an exceptional woman remains alive, a present and timeless symbol of words charged with value: freedom, equality and law.

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