

Fundación Banco Santander promotes *La Voz Sola*, by Ana María Martínez Sagi: a poet, writer and sportswoman who revolutionized the figure of women in Spain.

Juan Manuel de Prada wrote the prologue and compiled "*La voz sola*" for the Obra Fundamental Collection, an essential anthology of poetry and articles by this Catalanian woman, a pioneer in sport and social activism in favour of women.

A pioneer in the transformation of the role of Spanish women in the 20th century, Ana María Martínez Sagi was the National Javelin Champion in 1931, the first director of a football club in the world - FC Barcelona, 1934 -, injured in the Aragon Front acting as a war correspondent, a columnist committed to social causes, a collaborator of the French Resistance against the Nazis, a street painter, and a decorator in the home of Aga Khan. Moreover, she was also a poet considered to be Rosalía de Castro's heir, and a high-ranking prose writer, although she died in complete solitude after her exile to the United States.

Trailer of the book featured on the Fundación Banco Santander YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Mh1I2pusL98>

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"*La voz sola*", by Ana María Martínez Sagi (Barcelona 1907-2000), is the new volume of the **Colección Obra Fundamental**, published by **Fundación Banco Santander** (www.fundacionbancosantander.com), on this occasion an **anthology and prologue by the writer Juan Manuel de Prada**.

We are before a unique, multifaceted and diverse figure, who combined her heroic sporting exploits with the adventure of the correspondent during the Civil War and the chronicles of the most committed female activism, in the fight for women's rights and freedom in Spanish society, giving space and voice in her articles to many of those who were silenced at that time. Ana María's talented poetic sensibility and her revolutionary

and pioneering spirit were buried over time, such that according to **Juan Manuel de Prada**, "her books, which had been greeted with unanimous dithyrambs at one time, were banished from anthologies and dictionaries". The new Eve, as Prada calls her in the prologue, was designated *heiress to Rosalía de Castro*, among others, by CansinosAsséns.

For **Francisco Javier Expósito**, the Foundation's literary director, "Sagi breaks all the patterns of the woman of her time, indulging in a radical and non-conformist freedom that will lead her to loneliness and oblivion", which is why, "beyond the borders or ideological labels that Sagi never obeyed, she is an indispensable figure due to her pioneering character and her unquestionable literary quality".

However, Sagi was much more than a great poetess and an insurgent prosecutor who talked about those things that others do not want to write about, approaching the most abrupt grounds of the social labyrinth. When she arrived in Madrid to present her first book of poetry, *Caminos* (1929) and give a talk at the Lyceum Club Femenino, César González Ruano described her as "a poet, a syndicalist and a virgin of the stadion...with a beauty that even repelled the naked eye and that needed a culture of contemplation".

She stood out in the most varied sporting disciplines, winning a gold medal in javelin throwing at the first National Women's Athletics Championship in 1931, as well as becoming a very active member of the *Club Femení i d'Esports*, a pioneering initiative of Catalan feminism, although she would later criticise in some of her articles the lack of companionship in female environments. Her concern for the promotion and political participation of women led her to embark on lecture tours around the country in which she "spread the word that women should obtain a culture that is as much physical or sporting as it is spiritual, if they really want to achieve emancipation", interviewing women who are important for their activity in favour of gender equality, Prada says. This is how she met the woman who was to be her lifelong muse, the writer included in this same collection, Elisabeth Mulder, who did not correspond with the same sentiment in their relationship, although they spent a holiday together in Mallorca in 1932: "more than sixty years later our author still remembers it as the nuclear event of her life, whose radiating force constantly illuminated her memory", writes Juan Manuel de Prada.

Sagi supported the emergence of the Republic by founding, together with other women of Catalan letters, the Front Únic Femení Esquerrist, a civic group that promoted women's spirit of citizenship and fought against the enemies of rights and freedom. The closeness of her father to FC Barcelona - she was the treasurer - and her brother - one of its earliest strikers - opened the way for her appointment in 1934 - through Josep Sunyol i Garriga - as the first woman to head a football club, not only in Spain but also in the world - a case that was widely reported in the media - as reported in *Crónica*, "She is not only a remarkable sportswoman, but also a very credible writer...she will bring to the position an evident ability, admirable practical sense and an accurate vision of social issues", even though, as Prada says, "the atmosphere around football did not allow her to develop her projects", and a year after her appointment, she resigned.

Enrolled in the anti-fascist militia columns, she became a correspondent for *El Tiempo de Bogotá* and left the City Hall to go to the front in 1937 and write "chronicles that were very vibrant and full of originality, although excessively partial and with edges of fury", reflects our prologist, until, in August 36 she was wounded by the fragments of a grenade and was transferred to a hospital, although later she returned to the Aragon Front in 1937 and published chronicles in *Nuevo Aragon* which were much more attentive to the human factors than to ideological aspects. In 1939 she crossed the border into France, and collaborated with the French Resistance against the Nazis throughout the war, and worked as a translator for film magazines until 1947, when the conflict was over, at which point she decided to go to Cannes and make a living as a street artist and painting scarves with gold dust. The magnate Aga Khan then hired her to decorate his house, paying her such a stipend that she eventually retired to Provence to grow lavender and jasmine for the perfume industry.

Around 1959, driven by "those dark empires of her inner world" that Ruano glimpsed at in his first interview in 1929, she went to Latin America, and after crossing several countries she arrived in the United States, where she worked as a professor of Spanish and French at the University of Illinois at Urbana. On her return to Spain in 1977, she decided to seclude herself in the town of Moià, disillusioned with literary circles. She died in a Santpedor nursing home in the most absolute oblivion of her work and her life.

This anthology

Juan Manuel de Prada recomposes the story of Sagi's solitude in the complete prologue *Un laberinto de presencias* (A Labyrinth of Presences), and tells how he met a nonagenarian Ana María, lost in the town of Moià, who ended up giving him her unpublished writings, of which we now publish a large part of her poetic material, in addition to the almost ninety articles in Spanish and Catalan that Prada has collected, written between 1929 and 1937, in newspapers as diverse as *La Rambla*, *Crónica*, *Deportes*, the Women's Supplement of *Las Noticias*, *La Libertad*, *La Noche* without forgetting the chronicles from the *Nuevo Aragón* front in 1936 and 1937, which constitute a unique document of the struggle in the Aragón front with its vignettes.

The pieces that she published in *Crónica*, says Juan Manuel de Prada, will come to be the most notable of her journalistic activities, "the most vibrant in terms of dynamism and social concern", since she was as much concerned with the hairdressers' guild as she was with the employees in the textile industry, the few successful political leaders or writers, not to mention the beggars who spend the night in the boilers of the ships in the port of Barcelona. Or as in *Amor*, an acid article where she writes about the irony of marriage. Almost ninety articles make up this collection, both in Catalan and in Spanish, which portrays Spanish society at the time as well as the concerns of Sagi herself, with articles of great belligerence in favour of women's rights, as in *Mujer y cultura*, where she states that "through culture women will be able to walk without fear of danger and difficulties: the greatest obstacles that want to hinder their steps will disappear...", or in *Derechos de la mujer*, where she defends that "after many years and centuries they remember that women exist, and that they are even boisterous, and that they even serve for something more than just being in front of the fire, to me that seems very good. The right to perfect oneself and live fully, which no one has disputed for a long time, is precisely what feminism demands...".

This volume includes many of her unpublished poems composed by Ana María in *Noche sobre el grito* and *La voz sola*, as well as the best verses from her collections of poems and various publications, all written almost exclusively in Spanish, except for poems such as *Infinit* or *Estiu* -printed in their original language- with books such as *Caminos* (1929), of a "carnal mysticism" very much applauded at the time with the mixture between "the frenzy of

modernity and the embers of tradition" according to Prada; *Inquietud* (1932), in which the influence of Elisabeth Mulder is notorious, or her poems *del frente de Aragón todo un mundo*; and *Laberinto de presencias* (1969), in which a very personal and attractive style comes together and brings together various volumes such as *Canciones de la isla*, *País de ausencia*, *Amor perdido*, *Los motivos del mar*, and *Visiones y sortilegios*, a poetic and personal itinerary "the busy chronicle of a political exile" that ended in Moià, where "she decided to bury her voice alone, forgotten by the world, locked up with her posthumous memories, embraced by the spectre of a distant love that never stopped illuminating her insomnia" writes Juan Manuel de Prada.

Presentation to the public

The presentation to the public will take place at the Salón de los Espejos of the Gran Teatro del Liceo in Barcelona this July 1st at 19.30h, and will be attended by the Minister of Culture of the Generalitat de Catalunya, Mariàngela Vilallonga, María Teixidor, the Secretary of the Board of Directors of Barca and responsible for its women's football, the Director of La Vanguardia, Marius Carol, and the author of the prologue of the volume, Juan Manuel de Prada, as well as the Literary Head of the Banco Santander Foundation, Francisco Javier Expósito.

About Fundación Banco Santander

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With this objective, we develop initiatives grouped into three lines of action: the promotion of culture as a tool for understanding the world around us, social action to facilitate the progress of vulnerable groups and care of the environment to protect natural heritage.

In all our programmes we strive to create networks of collaboration with the third sector in order to face the main global challenges together.