

Women in Academia from the 19th to the 21st Century¹

As noted in the introduction to *Les femmes dans le monde académique*, “Studies on the place of women in the academic world have advanced considerably over the last ten years [...] numerous magazine issues and articles have taken an interest in the ambiguous links between science, research and gender.” (Rogers and Molinier, 2016: 9). This monograph is yet another addition to that promising list.

The literature published to date consistently underscores the fact that gender inequality in academia has endured into the 21st century. Despite the greater university success of women in many fields of study, “the evidently sexed functioning of different university disciplines, while evolving, still maintains the pattern of a sexual division of scientific labour” (Rogers and Molinier, 2016:10). The persistence of feminized degree programmes and others with an absence or paucity of women (Santesmases, 2001) entails another series of observations: the higher up the academic ladder, the greater the waste of women’s talent, better known as the “glass ceiling” phenomenon. Statistical data bear this out: barely 25% of full professors in the European Union are women.²

The current issue, like many other studies in this field, rests on two methodological premises: multidisciplinary and comparison on an international scale. The former encompasses history, history of education, sociology, biography, literary criticism and information technology. These parallel compared spheres are especially present in the opening articles, which trace the first steps of university women on both sides of the Atlantic (Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Brazil and Spain).

This first part, which spans the transition from the 19th to the 20th century, clearly illustrates the struggle between old barriers and new conquests of the first women in universities; beyond borders and legal, social, functional or internal obstacles, it outlines the routes and strategies adopted by some pioneering women and reveals their individual odysseys, paths and transgressions (Flecha-Palermo; Landaeta; Rivera; Prado).

In the second part, moving into the 20th century, monographs and case studies take a closer look at specific cultural strategies, such as reading or writing (Nadali), in the occupation of certain fields, conquests and networks. But they also look at the obstacles, at how a place for women has gradually been carved out in the halls of learning, in a co-educational yet still unequal world. At the same time, they touch upon the tormented, peaceful repose of poetry in exile, a remarkable and eventful biography (Jato) and other channels by which university women made their way abroad (Rodríguez, Rodríguez). In the late 20th cen-

tury, other contributions explore the role of feminist studies in different disciplines and in the institutional transformations of the university (Ávila), or in the uncountable pages of the digital press (Figuerola, Groves, Rodríguez-Jiménez); In short, female presence.

Resting on the twin pillars of interdisciplinarity and international comparison, and drawing on written, oral or digital sources, personal histories or collective vicissitudes, these pages journey from the Latin American and Spanish universities of the 19th century to the modern lecture halls of the 21st century. They trace a history of the conquest of rights and reveal the feminization of a secular, sexed institution where, despite all the efforts, struggles and transgressions, time has not managed to eradicate the traces of inequality.

The opening chapter appropriately addresses one of the ground-breaking milestones of change in the contemporary era: access to university for women. Although the rights won in the revolutionary programme of the late 18th century only extended to men, history shows that “the criteria [...] of the patriarchy has not always been decisive”. As Olimpe de Gouges and Mary Wollstonecraft did in the French Revolution, women also continued to discover certain rights that opened the door to attractive possibilities of improving their own life paths. Despite the “assumptions that stifled the freedom of women [...], they demonstrated their ability to create cracks in that patriarchal context” (Flecha, Palermo).

This opening text and the four articles that follow discuss diverse yet convergent processes in which women fought to conquer a new sphere for their lives: access to the university and the world of formal education and professional careers. These pioneers were remarkable for their “lucid insistence, undaunted by any frustration” when access to the classroom was denied or discouraged, and their persistence in studying for professions traditionally reserved for men.

“Women who set their sights on a future that required a university education found a way to achieve it” (Flecha, Palermo). To make their way into academia, those young women employed a number of strategies available to them, which did not vary significantly from one country to the next (from Spain, France and Mexico to Chile and China): a) discreetly taking advantage of legal loopholes; b) publicly expressing their determination and demands; c) travelling to other countries where they could enrol at a university when they encountered obstacles at home (Russia, China); d) taking legal action; e) creating medical colleges or associations for women; f) expressing their feminist convictions and publicly defending them from critics; g) defining their feminism in the sub-

mission of end-of-studies projects and other writings (Palermo, 2006).

The results of their striving only strengthened their resolve to continue the struggle. In the course of their conquest, they discovered the gap between what society demanded of them and what they were capable of doing—a surprising revelation at the time. In scholarship and in the university classroom they found “a setting where they became more aware of their abilities and of the inevitable role they might play”: financial independence, personal satisfaction derived from work and services rendered, and new spaces of freedom and fulfilment for women. These spaces were springboards to engagement in other aspects of public life for, “in addition to practising their profession, they became involved in various activities with a considerable social impact”, promoting female associationism as one of the first, the legacy of which lives on in Argentina, Mexico and Spain.

These pioneering women also made an effort to announce and share their results, overcoming old resistances and customs. Not content to merely shatter the mould and open the doors of the university, they used this same forum to publicize their achievements. Just as the first female university students in Catalonia did when presenting their doctoral theses (Flecha, 1996) some Latin American women also took advantage of the public forum to defend their struggle: “Did some whisper, others disapprove, a few or many applaud? [...] I feel, upon private self-examination, that I have not lost anything by educating myself, that I have not diminished my woman’s dignity, nor twisted the character of my sex! No! Education is not, as many claim, the undoing of woman: it is her salvation” (Flecha, Palermo). As Flecha and Palermo note, the experience of this possibility, for those willing to accept the cost of striving and constancy, spread from country to country. The paths along which this news spread like wildfire are still being investigated, an important subject that certainly merits further analysis. Travel and the press served as channels of dissemination, and several others are mentioned in these pages.

However, this profound innovation, despite the social transgression it entailed, did not always translate into a “disruption in their lives [...] these women did not always seek a total break with precedent”. Other cautious pioneers “chose the path of discretion, of quietly seizing opportunities and loopholes, and their sentiments and expectations were essentially focused on expanding the boundaries of personal freedom”. Geneviève Fraisse (2010) has already shown how, in the 1830s, as they made the transition from governesses to career schoolteachers, Frenchwomen concealed the break with the past that this change represented: they achieved autonomy and personal independence, moved from the private to the public sphere, and went from working for a family to working for the state. Fearing that this qualitative leap might meet with opposition and rejection, they masked the novelty of the situation by arguing that they were still doing the same job, fulfilling the same caretaking duties, just in different settings. In short, their role as teachers was simply

an extension—allegedly—of the maternal role they played as governesses. This dissociation of discourse from reality, of the *fait accompli* from its hidden significance, was a constant in many women’s victories. Significant events such as the untimely demise on the gallows of champions of women’s rights in the French Revolution (Fauré, 2010: 133-160) or the changes introduced in the wording of the British Reform Act of 1832 had alerted women to the potentially dire consequences of openly advertising the significance their own acts and encouraged them to keep quiet on the subject, wrapping truly radical changes in the guise of continuity. This process, lucidly explained by Consuelo Flecha, (2006, 2008) has also been defined by Josefina Luzmel as the “wiles of the weak” (Caballé, 2013: 16-37).

In Latin America, secondary and higher education for the children of the ruling class was an effective vehicle of upward social mobility for members of this elite and the ambitious upper-middle class. Higher education was effectively a class education for moulding future leaders. However, a university education was primarily an asset for the middle classes rather than the aristocracy, as a retrospective analysis of the situation in 19th-century Europe clearly shows. In the 1800s, primary education was generally imparted by members of the working or middle classes, secondary education by the middle class and administrative professions, and higher education by the ruling class or aristocracy. It opened the door to other female occupations then inconceivable for high-born women. In those days, the women of the ruling class led a life of leisure or lived off their income, and an education was neither a necessity nor a desirable ornament for most of their daughters, at least in Europe. It was generally the daughters of prosperous middle-class or bourgeois citizens who pursued a higher education, primarily motivated by their desire to have a profession and earn a living. Yet there are some noticeable differences between the social backgrounds of Chilean and Spanish girls. For example, the works published by Landaeta and by Prado clearly show that female university students in Chile came from the *haute-bourgeoisie*, while those in Spain belonged to the bourgeois or middle classes, many of whom were daughters of liberal professionals and, quite often, civil servants. Nor should we overlook “the prominence achieved by many socially well-positioned women, especially among the great names of Latin America”, although a great deal more information is needed before we can make definitive assertions in this respect. Law studies were a different case on both sides of the Atlantic, beginning earlier in the Americas than in Europe, as they were often a springboard to a male political career.

In the relationship between feminism and nationalism, in the Americas women benefited from their support or sympathy with revolutionary or independence processes, which were also one of the factors, as Françoise Thébaud (1993) has pointed out, that contributed to the conquest of women’s rights in other latitudes. Although political independence came too early in Latin America to be directly linked to the growing relevance of women, some sources

do indicate that the association between independence, nation and women's causes worked to the latter's advantage. In poems and stories written as early as 1806–1807, the *Diario de México* frequently alluded to problems caused by women who were not meek and submissive, who came across as “know-it-alls” (a critical dig at female activists or women active in public life).

Women's access to universities can also be analysed from the perspective of old problems surrounding the origin of the laws that authorized it: the relationship between tradition and law or between conquest and concession. In many countries, there was a legal vacuum regarding women's access to higher education: it was neither considered nor expressly forbidden by law. Tradition and the patriarchal social model to which women conformed were responsible for their absence from universities. However, when they took advantage of this legal loophole to enrol at universities, the law stepped in to reinforce established conventions and banned them in several countries (including Spain and Russia), although their presence was eventually legislated at a later date. We find at least two different cases in this area. Chile passed a permissive law in 1877, ahead of other countries and just four years after the first women had requested access to higher education (Flecha, Palermo; Landaeta). Women's demands and petitions preceded legislation. In Spain, initially (1872–1882) women were able to enter university classrooms because there was no law expressly forbidding it, using this legal vacuum or loophole to make their demands. However, impediments to this access were not long in coming (1882–1888). Their repeated petitions, not numerous but certainly conscientious, eventually led to the belated enactment of a more permissive Spanish law in 1910; by then nearly one hundred women had already breached the university walls by petitioning academic and government authorities to make an exception and waive the restrictions that barred them from enrolling. These are just two cases in which legislation was passed thanks to the determined, persistent demands of some women, whose efforts helped to overcome a centuries-old tradition.

Yet even after laws were passed in different countries giving women the right to attend university, they continued to encounter numerous obstacles. Once again, tradition rose up to block their way, openly opposing the new legislation in the press, advertising and public opinion—guardian of the conventional patriarchal model—with constant appeals to custom and common law. This is illustrated by some of the statements published in Brazil regarding the first female university graduates, of which this issue contains several examples: “the lady doctor may rest assured that her mannish feet will never cross my threshold”; a woman's brain “lacks the capacity to assimilate medical science”; or “she will never find a man willing to marry her” (Flecha, Palermo). Commenting on how she was denied the possibility of practising as a physician, Argentinian pioneer Cecilia Grierson said, “The reasons and arguments given [for this denial] would fill a chapter against the intellectual and economic feminism

which I have always defended” (Grierson, quoted in Flecha, Palermo). In the relationship between tradition and the law, different realities highlight the obstacles of suspicion and doubt incurred by these “modern women” who chose to work outside the home. Ingrained customs, mentalities and prejudices about the female condition were stronger than any government regulation. One woman even declared: “No, no, in Spain feminism is at an impasse not because of the government but because of our customs, which are shrivelled and spineless; and here, where no woman would think it wrong to dance a tango, for example, she would think it very wrong to go to the university lecture halls to study Logic and Ethics” (Flecha, Palermo). We must not forget that, in the preceding centuries, women had been excluded from the circles of erudite culture by mentality and tradition, not laws.

Another fact clearly observed in different countries is that women study to practise a profession; studies on the subject have shown that university degrees and careers invariably go hand-in-hand, and these findings are clearly corroborated in the following pages. Indeed, a Chilean law passed in 1877 clearly articulated this connection between education and career, in both its title—“Examinations for women to earn professional degrees”—and in the general provisions, which state “that women must be allowed to sit valid exams for earning professional degrees”, that “they may productively practise some of the professions termed scientific”, and that “it is important to give them the means of earning a self-sufficient living” (Landaeta). This female professional ambition was no minor obstacle—as we have seen in the above-quoted statements from Brazil—as it fuelled fears that these highly qualified young women would not be content to have satisfied their intellectual curiosity once they graduated and would want to seek paid employment, and with it greater freedom and independence. In other words, people suspected that they planned to achieve other goals which would upset the distribution and arrangement of existing social spheres, then quite hermetic and separate. As early as 1893, María Goyri proclaimed that men's fear that we will compete with them reminds me of the cigar-makers' fear when the first machines were introduced; they raise the hue and cry, but there can be no doubt of the outcome; you can't stop the march of progress (Flecha, Palermo).

However, obstruction was not the only male reaction to women in university programmes. Some of the lecturers who taught them expressed different attitudes and published opinions. In some cases, their efforts were also supported by the press: “Anyone who becomes acquainted with Miss Rivera (Columba Rivera Osorio, Mexico) will be convinced that knowledge neither kills nor poisons” (Macías, quoted in Flecha, Palermo). The triumph of Antonieta César Díaz from Brazil was hailed as “yet another victory for her sex over the crude and unfortunately still prevalent prejudices that view education as atrophying”, for her achievement constituted “the most vehement protest against opinions contrary to our emancipation” (Colling, quoted in Flecha, Palermo).

Moreover, the sources consulted highlight the fact that many university lecturers supported the incursion of women. Before any woman could join their classes, the teaching staff had to commit to guaranteeing “order in the lecture halls where said young ladies are in attendance”. In Spain, the academic records of these women students show that many lecturers rose to the occasion and welcomed them to their classes. The very year that María Goyri expressed her fears, Miguel Morayta reported on a woman student’s request to attend a class: “I find the petition of the interested party eminently reasonable and therefore have no objection to granting it. 9 October 1893.” The following year, Antonio Sánchez Moguel shared his positive experience, proving fears to be groundless: “The undersigned has taught General Literature to the exponent and can dutifully certify that not only was she never once a cause or pretext for disturbing the peace of the class, but her presence, her conduct and her studious application served as a stimulus to less industrious students. 30 September 1894.” In this way, many lecturers overcame the widespread belief that the classroom should be an exclusively male domain and the notion that the admission of women would pose a threat. These and other precautions, such as making women wait at the door of the classroom beside the cleaning equipment, had hitherto kept a safe distance between male and female students. They reinforced the impression of isolation, deemed advisable in reaction to the unwonted presence of these bold females, and legitimized two separate educational models, with a hierarchic distribution of differences between men and women. The authors of the articles reflect on the significance and scope of these messages.

In those same contexts, but specifically referring to Spain and more particularly to Salamanca, fifteen years after the first woman, María Elena Maseras, was admitted to the University of Barcelona, Angela Carraffa de Nava (1872–1987) became the first to enrol at Salamanca. There was a clear chronological difference between eastern and western Spain, between industrial and agricultural regions, between proximity to and distance from Europe, between the first women physicians and the woman destined to become Spain’s first female doctor of philosophy and literature. However, in the field of science the timelines of Salamanca and Barcelona converged: Isidora Elisa Gómez Martín graduated with a degree in chemical science from the University of Salamanca at the same time as María Sordé Xipel became the second woman to graduate from the University of Barcelona (the first had done so in 1886–87). They paved the way for women to enter the new non-feminized degree programmes, although at first progress was slow. No science degrees were awarded to women in the first decade of the century, but several had enrolled at the end of that period. Three graduated before 1910 (two in Barcelona and one in Salamanca) and four in each of the two following decades: a prudent and moderately progressive path (Prado).

Salamanca’s significantly belated acceptance of women introduced another novelty that set it apart from

other universities in Europe, the Americas and the world: the first female student enrolled in philosophy and literature, but the second, Teresa Iglesias Recio, studied medicine from 1906 to 1913. She also took an interest in foreign languages, specifically French and German, although her marks were not as brilliant as her predecessors.

While the pioneers of the 19th century opted for medicine, in this second wave women flocked to the Faculty of Philosophy and Literature, a discipline where they encountered fewer obstacles to attending university because it functioned as a segregated space for women and was seen as more befitting their “feminine nature”, for few men were eager to pursue such an unprofitable career. Some of the defining traits of this second generation began to emerge in the first decade of the 20th century. In addition to the aforementioned scientific branch, women ventured into the emerging field of pharmacy, and in 1918 two pioneering women were awarded the first doctorates at Salamanca, in pharmacy and science. Even more surprising is the early incorporation of two women in the university faculty at Salamanca in the 1930s, in the field of physics (1930 and 1934).

Law school was a different story in the Americas and Spain: in the New World, women were pioneers in law studies, but in Spain women found it very difficult to practise law; as a result, some dropped out—as in the aforementioned case of María de Maeztu, in Spain—and others chose to enter this field more or less belatedly (Landaeta, Rivera, Prado). In this discipline, it is also important to consider the connections between law and politics, between knowledge and power. Female enrolment in law studies was quite belated in Salamanca; the bar councils closed their doors to women, and rights were denied when it became apparent that women intended to use them, applying the same formula of exclusion used repeatedly since the British Reform Act of 1832. In Spain, the first woman to graduate from law school and be admitted to the bar did not come along until 1922 (Ascensión Chirivella Marín, in Valencia), and Consuelo Jiménez Fernández did so the same year in Salamanca, ten years after María de Maeztu’s attempt.

Most of these Salamanca university students were the daughters of middle-class liberal professionals, and in several cases they studied alongside their brothers; some, though not all, of this second generation had brilliant academic records. The majority (52 out of 74) chose to study philosophy and literature, several continued their education at the *Residencia de Señoritas* [Residence for Young Ladies] or abroad, and some went into exile (Prado).

These articles on the first third of the 20th century in Spain have one more thing in common: the novelty and originality of their sources (Prado, Betrisey). The article on the first women students in Salamanca, discussed above, draws on internal university sources that are “fundamental, such as student files, enrolment registers and reports” (Prado). Originally examined by Consuelo Flecha, here these sources are thoroughly, painstakingly evaluated and completed by María Luz de Prado.

The aforementioned *Residencia de Señoritas*, where some Salamanca university women completed their studies, is explored by Débora Betrisey, delving deeper into a central theme in cultural history: female readers and readings, power and pleasure (Martínez, 2005). This article is also remarkable for the novelty of its sources and methodology, based on a careful review of the minutes of meetings held by the *Residencia* librarians—presided over by María de Maeztu—and an examination of the records of readings and female readers, the “diary” and the library statistics. In addition to treating them as “extractive sources” of specific provisions and objectives, they are analysed as moulded cultural products with the aim of “favouring mechanisms of encouragement or inducement to reading, to the detriment of prohibitions”, defining reading habits and patterns among women. The methodology is based on an extensive cultural history of reading in Spain, highlighting the material, cultural and social conditions that “determine” and give it meaning. They also express “broader social, political and cultural processes” that rank, confirm or discredit certain practices according to multiple processes of social differentiation. Despite being a highly topical subject, the theme of the *Residencia* has not been exhausted in the excellent monographs devoted to this topic, which have already underscored the importance of the library and laboratory (Cuesta, Turrión et al. 2015). Here we find a socio-anthropological study of the production of female readers, the methods of creating women readers—through processes of appropriation or resignification of legitimate reading—which we cannot assume to be identical, homogeneous or mechanical in any case. This *production of female readers* was based on a network of relationships that left “trails” and wove a web of social interactions that supported reading, a process which unfolded in that library, a well-known, symbolic “place” and the centre of social life at the *Residencia*. For María de Maeztu, the cultural transformation of women was a means of instilling in them a sense of pride and freedom by allowing them to realize their own potential. The logic of the *gift* (taking, giving and receiving) sustained the illusion of being part of a caring community based on giving, receiving and giving back, necessary for fuelling the “spirit of Family/Home” already noted in existing literature. And all of this was possible without having to radically contravene established notions of the “female condition” in the society of that time. In order to obtain the requisite authorization for what was viewed as a social transgression, the headmistress strategically used the language of social domination of women (quoted below) as a device free of coercion, replaced by an “institutional endeavour”: she constructed ritual processes by means of the numerous social events held at the residence, such as memorial ceremonies, tea parties, dinners with the headmistress, attendance at lectures and even the “House Library”.

The *Residencia de Señoritas* closed in 1936, when many of the advances made in the classrooms were cut short for both men and women with the outbreak of the

Spanish Civil War and the defeat of the Republican forces in 1939. However, at the time, and in the decades that followed, there were still opportunities for learning abroad, which proved to be an emancipating experience for many women, as we will see in the following article (Rodríguez-Jiménez, Rodríguez). The experiences of women forced into exile were more traumatic (Jato).

Pilar Domínguez (2009) offers us an in-depth analysis of Concha Zardoya, another instance of a promising female career cut short, at the intersection of citizenship, exile and gender. In Zardoya’s case, invisibility and oblivion were magnified by exile and the obstacles posed by her dual citizenship and gender, multiplying the factors of non-place. Mónica Jato analyses how Concha, like other male and female exiles, fought to recover her homeland and her roots, that “painful citizenship”—“the loss of the Spanish landscape meant the loss of her cultural universe”—through language and poetry “as an exercise in personal survival”. She followed in the footsteps of Juan Ramón Jiménez and many other Spanish teachers, men and women, who derived a sense of belonging and identity from their mother tongue when exiled from their homeland. Yet this change of scenery and “circumstances” did not prevent Zardoya from reviving the spirit of activism in which she had been educated. She continued to be “the alarm clock of consciences: for those above, those below, and those in the middle” (Jato), even though, like so many other women and exiles, her foreign status denied her the recognition she was due and kept her gaze fixed firmly on the “rear-view mirror”, with the past eternally rooted in her present. But in this awareness of “situated exile”, the poet cannot be a solitary entity: the “I” becomes a “we”, anchored in shared sentiments. Affect is an integral part of a policy of identity and resistance that breaks with isolation, with the silence and segregation of Franco’s Spain, which Zardoya had experienced in the flesh. This explains why her poetry was “a finely-tuned antenna of political and social history”.

Years later, other women would leave Spain under very different circumstances, not as exiles but as scholars eager to fulfil their academic aspirations, in Spain and in many other countries, as the first pioneering students had done before them. In the early days, Spanish women had received a boost from North American universities, just as Chinese women did. In Spain, the initial relationship forged with the United States in the times of the first female university students was resumed seventy years later, when the Franco dictatorship began to re-establish international relations and found itself forced to open up to the outside world. Economic, political and social factors made it a necessity in the midst of the Cold War. The “incorporation of Spain in the Fulbright programme laid the cornerstone of modernization”. This had significant educational results that accelerated the transformation of the Spanish university system, to which “we must also add the political and cultural repercussions” (Rodríguez-Jiménez, Rodríguez). However, we cannot overlook the differences in the

trajectories, roles and results of its protagonists. In summary, the internationalization of university studies was destined to continue, for women as well as men, to offer emancipating opportunities and the pursuit of excellence, regardless of the political regime at the helm of the country itself. The two escape routes—exile, suffered by Concha Zardoya and many others, and scholarships to study abroad—had very different consequences for the women who chose this path.

Three final articles examine the contemporary era from different angles. In contrast to the preceding studies, whose research is based on written sources, these texts draw on interviews, oral testimony and digital resources. They also share a conceptual premise, centred on the analysis of current inequalities and firmly situated in the reality of today. Two evince a clear commitment to interdisciplinarity through co-authorship (Montes, Groves; Figuerola, Groves, Rodríguez-Jiménez). The first aims to visibilize the unequal treatment of women in academia, both now and in the past; the second underscores the importance of not dissociating scientific and political approaches to social and gender inequalities in today's world; and the third traces the evidence of gender inequality in digital and social networks.

The article on micro-chauvinism and discrimination in academia discusses the existence of micro-chauvinism, a term coined by Bonino, in labour relations within the university. This concept refers to forms of male dominance over women, to impositions and abuses of power which, though subtle, are consciously or unconsciously repeated by men on a daily basis, establishing a pattern of sexist behaviour that is often hard to detect. In general, such practices are considered socially acceptable, unlike other forms of sexist violence which are usually reported and condemned. Micro-chauvinism is based on a positive perception of male traits and a negative perception of female attributes, thereby placing women in a situation of inferiority and “symbolic dependence”. From an interdisciplinary perspective, co-authors Montes and Groves show that, despite the legal equality of men and women in Spain, the latter are under-represented in university bodies of authority and have not managed to break through the “glass ceiling”: in 2017 only 21% of executive positions at universities were held by women. Their research, based on forty-three in-depth interviews with faculty members of a public Spanish university, reveals the unequal treatment of women in academia as a fundamental part of that problem. Here, oral history is one of the principal methods used to expose gender asymmetries in individual experiences—in this case, “micro-chauvinisms”. Tying in with the preceding articles, this study reviews the history of women in higher education, in Europe and in Spain. In line with the other contributions to this issue, the authors confirm that “the history of the university has been the history of a patriarchal institution traditionally dominated by men” (Montes, Groves). In Spain, women entered academia gradually and at a rather slow-

er pace than in other countries, and their road to the present day has run parallel to the struggle for equality between men and women. An overview of the principal milestones in international, European and domestic legislation—the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the Beijing Declaration of 1995, the 1999 Treaty of Amsterdam and, in Spain, the 2001 Organic Law of Universities or LOU and the 2007 Equality Act—is followed by a survey of studies that investigate gender inequalities in Spanish universities. The authors conclude by stating that they have focused on the micro-chauvinism suffered by women university lecturers in the course of their daily interactions with men in the workplace. The interviews conducted at a Spanish university revealed numerous examples of micro-chauvinism in work relationships between male and female colleagues. The most common form of this discriminatory practice is the use of language in sexist comments and jokes, cited many times by the male and female lecturers interviewed, although they also mention forms of intimidation involving non-verbal language. The oral interviews describe cases in which gender bias has determined the assignment of positions of professional authority, favouring men instead of basing decisions solely on individual merits. In short, the article demonstrates the usefulness of the concept of micro-chauvinism for visibilizing discriminatory practices that undermine the value of women lecturers in their daily life at universities and limit the advancement of their careers and the institution itself. The authors therefore conclude that, despite the substantial regulatory framework already in place, the academic authorities must intervene to eradicate every last trace of discrimination in the Spanish university system.

Virginia Ávila's work is a pioneering study of one of the academic networks that has made women's and gender studies its *raison d'être*: a centre for women's studies. From the perspective of an outsider, moulded by the Mexican reality and the vast city of learning that is the UNAM in Mexico City, she carefully scrutinizes the vicissitudes of feminist paths at a provincial university in Spain. In her view, “at a time when gender studies are being developed as a scientific field, at once specific and intersecting with other disciplines, it is important that the university institution be able to use its tools to reflect on its existence and its own ‘unthinkables’” (Ávila). Therefore, in a period stretching from Spain's transition to democracy to the present day, Ávila tracks the processes that have attempted to consolidate academic feminism, as well as their limitations, in a case study. She contrasts this experience with the realities that exist in other latitudes—having experienced them herself at universities in the United States—and reveals their highlights and shadows. In this “laboratory”, which weaves ties between university and society, feminism and institutionalization, the road in Spain has not been easy either, and the study makes no attempt to conceal the differences and conflicts that have emerged along the way. The author identifies the alliances between

women's associations in a golden age—the years of the transition to democracy—marked by inter-class gender solidarity (Díez Balda, 2002); “social movements brought women together, united by an awareness of the need to participate in order to bring about social changes” (Ávila). Women of diverse social classes and cultural backgrounds—well documented in Salamanca, for example—were able to lay the foundations of the movement, united “by common interests in securing their social, sexual and reproductive rights” (Ávila). But once the shared goal had been achieved, social and educational differences led each group to focus on its own interests and needs, and their paths began to diverge on the road to a progressive divorce between grassroots activists and a nascent academic feminism. This process revealed the non-porous nature of the university institution. Dilemmas also persisted between feminisms of equality and difference, between double- and single-minded activism, between radical and socialist feminism, and even in internal power struggles, several examples of which can be found in Salamanca academia. One of the author's statements is particularly thought-provoking: “The direct links to other women were severed with the rise of academic feminism. Other female social groups became the object/subject of study, no longer partners in a shared struggle” (Ávila). She makes another particularly significant assertion in her case study “that illustrates the lag of Salamanca”: in the academic feminism analysed, the field of feminist studies was quite narrow, “focusing on an important line of research, but restricted to the history of women [...] without tapping the resources of interdisciplinarity”. Other difficulties have hindered this Castilian university's attempts to gain recognition of feminist studies at the highest academic level, which have yet to obtain institutional consensus and the acknowledgement of academic peers up to the research institute level.

Likewise focused on the current state of affairs, the monographic study that concludes the issue is another demonstration of certain processes of the reproduction of inequalities, which occur with every change in relationships between the sexes; the conquest of equality gives rise to other inequalities and invisible factors. Naturally, this specialized digital journal issue would not be complete without an assessment of the topic from the perspective of digital technologies (Pons and Eiroa, 2018).

An illustrative introduction opens our eyes to the research potential of the digital humanities, realized in a study on the visibility of university women in a particular field and concept: the idea of “university” in the pages of the digital version of the Spanish daily *El País*. The article presents some provisional findings and identifies several possible future lines of action. Upon review, the study found that in the “university” field, with regard to “the women who appear in more news items—women with a higher score, or women with a better PageRank—the results are repeated in a different order, rank and proportion: there is a predominance of women ministers of education (and universities), and some

women artists and writers” (Figuerola, Groves, Rodríguez-Jiménez). The best-known and most frequently mentioned tend to be women in politics or literature, not in scientific publications or research, confirming the low visibility of university women in the press. That in-visibility signifies and implies a noticeable gender gap. In this case, the democratization of social media has not resulted in greater social and gender openness on the internet. It has not translated into progressive gender equality, as it reproduces the inequality built into the media, thereby confirming the appearance of a new “space for the reproduction of inequality”. Another conclusion is drawn from this interdisciplinary project between historians and computer scientists: “multidisciplinary teams should not be treated as a mere juxtaposition of separate disciplines, but as a place of scientific miscegenation” (Figuerola, Groves, Rodríguez-Jiménez). The same demand has been articulated in previous articles.

In conclusion, these pages show that the last century and a half has been a time of struggles, demands, strategies, transgressions, networks and vehicles of propagation of a steady female conquest in the developed world which continues to this day. But they also clearly reveal the limitations, conflicts, gaps and processes of reconstruction of inequality that emerge at every juncture.

In the end, as various authors point out, there is no denying the fact that women have come a very long way since the 19th century.

NOTES

- 1 This monographic issue is composed of the following research projects, coordinated by Prof. Josefina Cuesta: “*Mujeres en las Universidades de Castilla y León, siglo XX. Historia Comparada con otras universidades españolas*”, SA290A11-1 (2011-2013), Junta de Castilla y León; “*Historia de las mujeres en las universidades españolas, siglo XX. Comparación con universidades europeas*”, HAR2011-29514, Ministerio de Ciencia e Investigación; “*Mujeres y Saber. El acceso femenino a la sociedad del conocimiento en España*” (Proyecto HAR2014-58342 R), Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad; and “*Diccionario biográfico de mujeres universitarias en las Universidades de Salamanca, Valladolid, Madrid y Sevilla. Análisis y difusión de resultados mediante las TIC*” (Ref. SA233U14, 2015-2017), Junta de Castilla y León. The authors include researchers in various social science disciplines from the Spanish universities that take part in this report, as well as contributions from some of the leading scholars in Latin America (Argentina, Chile, Mexico, Brasil) and the United Kingdom.

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- 2 These figures came from the *9th European Conference on Gender Equality* (12-13-14 September 2016, Paris).

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Pilar Domínguez Prats
Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
e-mail: pdprats@dch.ulpgc.es
 ORCID iD: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8829-2508>

Josefina Cuesta
Universidad de Salamanca
e-mail: jcuesta@usal.es
 ORCID iD: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-0695-1670>

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