

Working Women, 1800-2017:

A Never-Ending (R)Evolution

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Edited by

Martine Stirling and Delphine Sangu

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INTRODUCTION

MARTINE STIRLING

For the majority of women growing up in Western Europe today, finding paid employment after finishing school, college or university is a choice by default or even a question of survival. The marriage bar, a rule under which women in the UK (and other European countries) were forced to resign from their job as soon as they wed, officially ended just under half a century ago¹. But long before that in 1936, during a Commons debate on the status of women in the Civil Service, Viscountess Astor², one of a very small minority of women MPs at the time, pointed out that more and more women were employed and that finding a husband was no longer their sole objective: “We are not living to-day in the kind of world described in *Pride and Prejudice* [...] in which a woman’s only occupation was to get married.”³

As historian Michelle Perrot points out, women have *always* worked but their unpaid contribution, no matter how valuable, was long disregarded as this work often took place within the confines of the home or of their husband’s business—in the artisanal trade, on market stalls, in shops.⁴ And despite much progress, she highlights the remaining gap between theory and practice in terms of gender equality in the world of work⁵. This gap has been underlined by numerous international reports

¹This frequent practice existed in the civil service, at the BBC and in sectors like teaching, banking and insurance. But it was not exclusive to Britain: it was also enforced by other countries including Switzerland, the Republic of Ireland (where it was officially abolished in 1973) and in France under the wartime Vichy government.

² Conservative MP for Plymouth Sutton, 1919-1945.

³ Hansard, HC, Vol. 310, *Supply: Civil Estimates*, April 1st, 1936, col. 2048.

⁴ “Les femmes ont toujours travaillé. Leur travail était de l’ordre du domestique, de la reproduction, non valorisé, non rémunéré. [...] Tout juste étaient-elles auxiliaires de leur mari, dans l’artisanat ou la boutique, ou sur le marché.” Michelle Perrot, *Mon Histoire des Femmes*, (Seuil/France Culture, 2006), 145.

⁵ “Bien des écarts subsistent. Ainsi dans l’accès aux responsabilités, aux professions, à l’égalité salariale [...] Souvent les frontières se déplacent, mais des terrains

and scientific publications over the years: in 1995, the United Nations Development Programme report estimated the value of women's unpaid work—their “non-monetized, invisible contribution” across the world at \$11 trillion.⁶ And almost 20 years later, it stated in a further report that there was a slow-down in progress towards gender equality and that the gender pay gap was hard to shake, tied as it was to women's situation as childbearers.⁷

Similarly, the 2019 Gender Equality Index pinpointed failings across the EU in particular concerning work-life balance for women. Once more, motherhood was a central issue as it pointed out that “Being a parent continues to impact women's access to the labour market, reflecting the disproportionate weight of care duties on mothers.”⁸

If we add to these remarks the conclusions of a World Bank study which found that in many countries across the globe, women are still barred from certain areas of employment and need their husband's permission to work outside the home; the fact that they have no protection or recourse against sexual harassment in the workplace and enjoy fewer rights in terms of property ownership and inheritance⁹, we can conclude that progress is wanting in many areas including work and employment.

Efforts have been made however during the last decade to sensitize the general public and decision-makers to these issues. Christine Lagarde, head of the IMF until 2019, emphasized on several occasions—such as The Women's Forum in Mexico or the Council on Foreign Relations in New York—the key role played by women in the economy, voicing her support

d'excellence masculine se reconstituent. Les acquis sont fragiles, réversibles.” Perrot, *Mon Histoire des Femmes*, 229.

⁶ United Nations Development Programme, Human Development Report 1995, Oxford University Press, New York, 1995, 97.

⁷ “The transition from the education system to the world of paid work is marked by a gender equality discontinuity, associated with women's reproductive role.” UNDP Development Report, *Beyond Income, Beyond Average, Beyond Today: Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century*, UNDP, New York, 2019, 149-151.

⁸ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) -Questions and Answers: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/qanda_20_357

⁹ Quentin Wodon and Benedicte de la Brière, *The Cost of Gender Inequality-Unrealized Potential: The High Cost of Gender Inequality in Earnings*, World Bank Group, May 2018, <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/29865/126579-Public-on-5-30-18-WorldBank-GenderInequality-Brief-v13.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

for women's quotas in order to appoint more women to top posts¹⁰. Her successor to this post, former World Bank CEO Kristalina Georgieva, also spoke of the urgent need for "policies that promote more and better jobs for women and equal pay at work."¹¹

Belgium voted in 2007 to include a gender dimension in all federal policy while French President Emmanuel Macron vowed to make gender equality a key priority when he took office in 2017. This was followed by several major initiatives in the field of education and the economy¹².

The topical nature of the subject and its growing political importance therefore made it a potential focus for research. There was also the fact that Delphine and I had first-hand experience of the difficulties involved in juggling motherhood and full-time work. During the early years of my career working for a large consultancy in the UK, I was one of many women dismissed due to pregnancy. My main feeling at the time was disbelief—but it was fully legal as I had been with my employers for less than two years. Even today in the UK, it is thought that up to 54,000 employees lose their job each year because of maternity¹³.

As lecturers specialising in languages for business, we felt there was an opportunity to develop a thematic of interest to our students but which was usually left out of discussions concerning their future career paths.

We favoured a transnational and transdisciplinary approach which we found was often difficult to come by in otherwise interesting and detailed publications on the subject of women's work.

¹⁰ https://www.challenges.fr/womens-forum/lagarde-aujourd-hui-je-suis-pour-les-quotas-de-femmes_656845 and https://www.lepoint.fr/economie/l-egalite-hommes-femmes-au-travail-un-processus-revolutionnaire-selon-christine-lagarde-12-12-2018-2278871_28.php.

¹¹ "Globally, Countries Lose \$160 Trillion in Wealth Due to Earnings Gaps Between Women and Men", World Bank Press release, May 30, 2018.

¹² Convention Interministérielle pour l'Égalité entre les Filles et les Garçons, les Femmes et les Hommes, dans le Système Éducatif 2019-2024, launched by Marlène Schiappa, Minister of State for Gender Equality and the Fight against Discrimination and Bruno Le Maire, Minister for the Economy.

¹³ In 1985, a minimum of two years with an employer was required to benefit from the basic maternity leave package in many UK companies with paid maternity leave and reinstatement in one's job after the birth. Legislation was amended in 1999 under Tony Blair's Labour Government. For more information on this topic see the Pregnant then Screwed campaign in the UK and <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/managing-pregnancy-and-maternity-workplace/pregnancy-and-maternity-discrimination-research-findings>, viewed 17/04/2020.

Our initial idea was to look into the differences in professional status between men and women, starting from two angles. One was offered by a report on inequalities between men and women in Brittany carried out by the French equivalent of the Office of National Statistics, the INSEE. It ascribed the salary gap largely to the fact that women did not hold the same types of posts as men as they were mostly in part-time, low-qualified and low-paid jobs. It went on to remark that this did not reflect their experience, training or qualifications as many of them were actually *better* qualified than the men but it seemed they had difficulty making full use of these qualifications¹⁴. They seemed in fact to remain in back-up or support roles rather than to move on to leadership roles.

Another angle was the much-disputed and controversial hypothesis formulated by Professor of Education Policy John Tooley in his book *The Miseducation of Women*.¹⁵ He claimed that policy-makers in the field of education were putting undue pressure on girls by not taking their basic needs into account—these allegedly being marriage, family and a home to look after. His ideas were discussed during a heated debate on BBC Radio 4 Women’s Hour.¹⁶

The first international workshop—*Women in Professional Context: Underlings by Default*—took place in October 2014 and examined women’s professional status across Europe. This was followed by a second conference in 2016 where Delphine and I explored women’s dual role as mothers and workers and their need to adapt their working methods to a changing social and technological environment over the centuries.¹⁷ We chose a period spanning part of the industrial revolution and the current digital revolution—three hundred years or so—with huge repercussions on working life. Our purpose was to reflect upon the impact of both events on the nature and characteristics of women’s paid labour across Europe and on employment or self-employment as a means of recognition and identity.

One difficulty was defining exactly what a working woman is (or was) as definitions of women’s work have evolved over the years in line with society’s changing view of a woman’s role¹⁸. Furthermore the notion of work—especially in the case of women—is complex and multifaceted and opens up other problematics depending on whether a woman is an

¹⁴ See “Revenus, Salaires, Égalité Professionnelle Hommes-Femmes : où en est-on”, INSEE Bretagne, OCTANT Analyse No 21, October 2011.

¹⁵ John Tooley, *The Miseducation of Women*, (Ivan R. Dee, 2002).

¹⁶ Woman’s Hour, BBC Radio 4, May 21st, 2002.

¹⁷ Women’s Work: an Ongoing (R)evolution (19th-21st centuries)?

¹⁸ For instance, in the 1930s, women who stayed at home to look after the children were frequently defined as “working women” in parliamentary debates.

entrepreneur, an employee, or works from home or outside the home. Thus the word ‘employment’ itself is sometimes confusing, as it can refer to the fact of being employed and paid by someone or to paid or unpaid activity¹⁹. We decided to concentrate on paid work, whether self-employment or employment.

The structure of this book follows different areas which came into particular focus during our conferences and its 15 chapters have therefore been divided into three parts. The first one, **Politics and the Shaping of Women’s Work**, deals with the different ways in which legislation has influenced women’s employment across Europe. Delphine Sangu takes the 1857 Moyano Law in Spain as a starting point and the numerous debates and conferences on women’s education and work which followed, leading to the creation of new schools and training centres for women in rural environments. By comparing the contents of Spanish political and parliamentary speeches of the time with the theories on women’s education in Spain and neighbouring countries she sheds light on a form of conditioning which prioritised the learning of household tasks and family hygiene for girls destined to become farmers’ wives and mothers.

Nieves Ibeas Vuelta²⁰ looks back at more recent times with an overview of her political career in Spain in the context of the 2007 law on gender equality²¹. One of its objectives was to encourage an increase in women’s representation in politics. In practice, however, it met with strong resistance including a form of “obsessional surveillance” of female politicians with constant checks and emphasis on their looks and physical appearance.

The study of the interaction between public policy and women’s place in society is echoed by Susan Finding who concentrates on welfare and gendered social policy in Europe and their impact on women’s employment. Referring to statistical evidence from various governmental bodies, she focuses on the United Kingdom in the context of the welfare model typology linked to gender over the past twenty years.

Fanny Cohen takes an interest in the organization of European boardrooms of share index companies with the purpose of identifying sociological factors which lie at the root of unequal gender representation at upper-management level. She discusses the effect and the limits of gender quota legislation.

¹⁹ As in the generic expression “gainful employment” or “useful employment”.

²⁰ Nieves Ibeas Vuelta, Regional deputy for the Aragon Parliament Cortes de Aragón (2003–2014) and President of the Chunta Aragonesista (2008-2012).

²¹ Ley Orgánica 3/2007 for effective equality between men and women. *B.O.E.* nº 71, March 23rd, 2007.

“Social egg freezing” or the freezing of oocytes for non-medical reasons is a very recent (and sometimes thorny) aspect of procreative legislation. Enrica Bracchi analyses the debate surrounding proposals from Silicon-Valley giants Apple and Facebook to subsidise women who choose to delay motherhood and put their career first. One of the questions raised in her article addresses the impact of what is supposed to be a form of perk in favour of gender-equality and how it translates in terms of equal opportunities.

In the second part, **A Woman’s Place**, we look at different views and perceptions of working women over the centuries. We explore traditional areas of women’s employment and the environment in which it takes place, be it geographical, such as in towns or in the countryside, or representational through the media such as the press, feature films or romantic novels.

We start with Marie Charvet’s study of the changes undergone by laundry houses in 19th century France following the recommendations of hygienists and the medical world and the impact these recommendations had on a type of business traditionally run by women.

Still in France, but a century later, Jérôme Pelletier takes us to the rural Loir-et-Cher region. He examines how, from the end of World War II to the early eighties, farmers’ wives had to adapt in many different ways to new farming techniques and management methods, resulting in the progressive loss of status of a job previously seen as a social and economic pillar of the community.

With Danièle Bussy-Genevois we move on to Spain where women’s newspaper archives between 1870 and 1936 give us a precious insight into the professional activity of women at the time and a glimpse of complex models of femininity. As new professions opened up to women and as feminist movements developed during the 1920s, publications like those of the republican period encompassed both ends of the political spectrum and now tell us a lot about a certain vision of working women.

19th-century Italian fiction is Emilie Hamon-Lehours’s starting point with the story and life of author Evelina Cattermole, better known as Contessa Lara. She reveals how, as more women became central characters of fiction and narratives, their demands and status came into sharp focus. Around that time, biographical and textual traces of long-forgotten women writers were unearthed and published so that they became a visible part of overall political history.

Italian films provide the backdrop and another angle of approach for Gloria Paganini’s study of women facing poverty and harassment in the workplace. Her main choice, *Mobbing–Mi piace lavorare (Harassment at Work–I like to work, 2004)* by Francesca Comencini, tells the story of a merger between two companies and its dramatic effect on Anna, an

employee whose status as a single mother makes her a prime target for moral harassment and redundancy. Through numerous references to other films, the portrayal of women in Italian cinema is analysed and discussed.

The third part of this book, **Home/Work**, looks at how social and economic factors together with family status have defined and redefined women's work over the years. It starts in 18th-century London, already then a powerful magnet for people in search of employment and opportunities who flocked to the capital city from other parts of Britain. Young women accounted for a large share of these migrants as the rural exodus came to a peak between 1830 and 1850. Working as a servant seemed an attractive proposition to girls who had left school early and hoped to earn a living with prospects and status improving over time. No specific training was required for such all-round jobs which also provided food and board. Drawing upon her extensive study of the London Foundling Hospital archives, Florence Pellegrini discusses the social impact of this migration on a whole generation of young British women, the difficulties they faced and their high sexual vulnerability in such a large and unfamiliar town.

19th-century migratory movements are also the theme chosen by Michela Sacco-Morel. This time the setting is seasonal work in the rice fields of the Po Plain in Northern Italy during a period when large numbers of people left their villages in search of subsistence or a better standard of living elsewhere. For many women, such a move brought more hardship and a heavier workload. However, it was also a pathway to increased autonomy and power—in other words, a form of emancipation.

During the same century, the quiet figure of the usherette was a recurrent character in French novels but little research has been carried out on this traditional woman's job. Pierre France, using an extensive collection of documents of the time, together with more recent interviews and even his personal experience of the job, reveals how this activity which was traditionally considered as precarious and of somewhat ill-repute, has evolved in a positive way. Far removed from the cartoon-like image of a shabby spinster eking out a meagre living from the odd tip, the job has undergone a real revolution and now attracts a completely different category of applicants of both sexes, thus bucking the feminisation trend in many other sectors of employment.

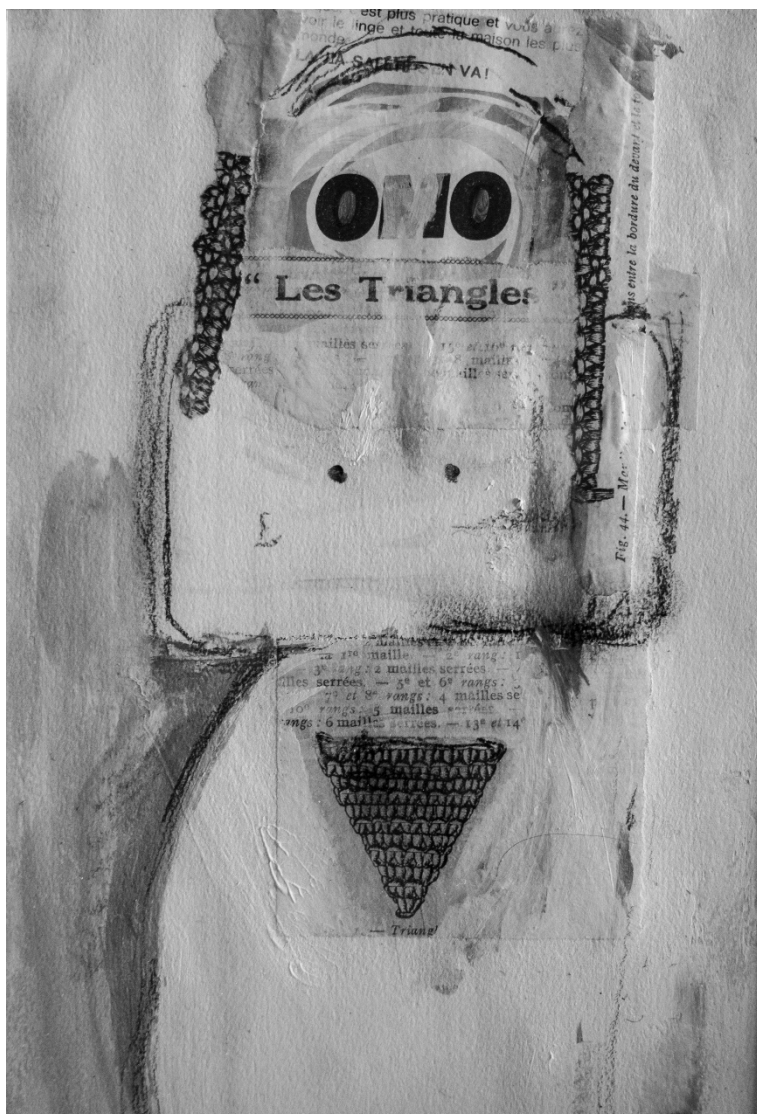
Louise Dalington has chosen to explore the different aspects of the trade-off between a satisfactory work/life balance and career advancement for many women in the UK today. She analyses the impact it has on their life course and career path. Since the 1970s, the move towards a service economy with more flexible working arrangements has theoretically enabled

mothers to fit work around caring for their children; but in practice, many problems remain such as the significant pay gap between men and women and the high incidence of part-time work which affects their subsequent professional prospects.

The last chapter also deals with the sometimes difficult combination of motherhood and career in the UK and looks into the possibilities offered by the digital revolution to mothers who want to start their own business. On the basis of interviews, newspaper and magazine archives, different aspects of big and small online companies created by women are analysed as is the role played by motherhood and children in the entrepreneurial process from a management and creative point of view. This raises the question as to what extent the digital revolution offers real leverage and new business opportunities to mothers.

Given how complex and diverse the issue of women's work is, this book can only at best skim the surface of a constantly changing topic. Nevertheless, it is hoped that it might provide an insight into the multiplicity of fields open to further exploration and the wealth of archives and stories waiting to be delved into and to reveal how women's work—its definition, conditions and methods—has changed over time and space. It is the story of a constant struggle, illustrated by the many settings which provide a backdrop for our different chapters and giving us an idea of disruptions and continuities which women have fought to conquer and make their own.

PART I:
POLITICS AND THE SHAPING
OF WOMEN'S WORK



OMO (Triangle Series)

Traditional women's crafts (a knitting pattern for a triangle) highlight a reference to tribal and totemic symbols of motherhood and fertility.

CHAPTER ONE

EDUCATION POLICY AND WOMEN FARMWORKERS IN RURAL SPAIN (1857-1910)

DELPHINE SANGU

Introduction

Among the many debates that strongly impacted Spanish society during the second half of the 19th century, one of the most innovative was undoubtedly that of women's education. This questioning was at the heart not only of laws, but also of discourses and treatises written by intellectuals, politicians and educational theorists. Promulgated in 1857, the Moyano Law paved the way for a series of debates and conferences on women's education and work within a society that was still deeply rooted in the rural world and in which, it is important to note, women outnumbered men.¹ And yet, the role of women in rural Spain – and more broadly in Europe – remains relatively little studied, as noted by such historians as Ofelia Rey,² Éliane Gubin,³ or again Danièle Bussy, who refers to the

¹ Pilar Folguera Crespo, “¿Hubo una revolución liberal para las mujeres? (1808-1868),” in *Historia de las mujeres en España*, ed. Elisa Garrido González, Pilar Folguera Crespo, Margarita Ortega, Cristina Segura, (Madrid: Editorial Síntesis, Col. Letras Universitarias, 1997), 421: “(...) las cifras más fiables de las que se dispone para el siglo XIX son las del censo de 1860, en el que la población total asciende a 15.673.536 habitantes de los cuales 7.907.973 son mujeres, lo que supone una proporción global entre ambos sexos de 49,55% y 50,45% mujeres.”

² On this subject, see Teresa María Ortega López, *Jornaleras, campesinas y agricultoras. La historia agraria desde una perspectiva de género* (Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, Col. Monografías de Historia Rural, no. 11, Sociedad Española de Historia Agraria (SEHA), 2015), 10: “En este marco, la obra que presentamos, *Jornaleras, campesinas y agricultoras. La historia agraria desde una perspectiva de género*, ha detectado un vasto ámbito de marginación y subestimación en los estudios históricos: las mujeres y las relaciones de género en el mundo rural.”

“silences in the history of women” in relation to rural Spanish women.⁴ Within this context, it seems legitimate to question the evolution of women’s education and work during the second half of the 19th century in rural Spain. This article will attempt to, firstly, define the educational model offered to girls in rural areas and, secondly, clarify the specificities of the work of women farmworkers in comparison with their male counterparts. An analysis of the discourses—both legislative (the Moyano Law) and pedagogical (an unpublished text by Joaquín Costa on women’s education)—will highlight the processes leading to a gendered differentiation in education (for example, through subjects such as household hygiene, reserved specifically for girls) as well as the division of agricultural tasks. This analysis will be carried out from a comparative perspective given that in the 19th and early 20th centuries, Spanish theorists of women’s education drew inspiration from the experiences of other European countries, particularly France, England and Belgium.

The European context

In Europe, from the second half of the 19th century and again at the beginning of the 20th century, a certain number of countries began to take an interest in the technical education of women farmworkers, in particular Germany, France, Belgium, Norway, Switzerland, Holland, Denmark,

³ Éliane Gubin, “Femmes rurales en Belgique. Aspects sociaux et discours idéologiques XIXe-XXe siècles,” *Clio. Femmes, Genre, Histoire*. No.16 (2002): 221-244, <https://doi.org/10.4000/cli0.181>: “Do rural women have a history? Their trajectory seems to defy the ‘traditional’ evolution of the emancipation of women. They are not included in the chronology elaborated over recent years by the history of women, and remain on the fringes of the great founding moments. Neither the political struggles over girls’ education, nor the emergence of feminism (mainly in urban areas) or of trade unionism and the first milestones of social legislation, had a decisive influence on their condition during the last century. Even the associative movement that accelerated with the interest taken by parties at the end of the century seems to leave women outside the most visible currents. The rural woman is doubly ignored, because she comes from the rural world and because she is a woman. She appears in another story, still largely unwritten but which already announces necessary revisions. For historians on women, she presents a real problem.” (translation ours).

⁴ On this subject, see Danièle Bussy-Genevois, “Propos féminins sur le travail (1860-1933)”, *Mélanges de la Casa de Velázquez* [En ligne: 40-2 | mis en ligne le 15 novembre 2012, 117-134: <https://doi.org/10.4000/mcv.3613>.

Russia and England.⁵ According to the analysis by Francisco Cobo Romero and Teresa María Ortega López, girls in these countries received general education from the age of six, coupled with training in the rudiments of agriculture, the aim being to awaken in them a “love of the countryside.”⁶ The educational policy established by the governments of the aforementioned countries was based on two types of structures: specialised centres on the one hand and permanent and itinerant women’s agricultural schools on the other.⁷ In constant progression between 1880 and 1930, these schools spread theoretical and especially practical knowledge related to agriculture throughout rural areas.

With the publication in 1859 of Pierre Joigneaux’s book *Conseils à la jeune fermière*⁸ on the professionalisation of young women farmers, Belgium led the way in terms of women’s agricultural education,⁹ followed by France and England.

In France, the interest aroused by this issue was reflected in several published works (including the republication of Pierre Joigneaux’s book in 1882), but also in the creation of the Jeanne d’Arc Agronomic Institute in Paris under the impetus of Marie Maugeret,¹⁰ and of the Coëtlegon Dairy, the first practical dairy school, in 1886 in Rennes. According to the research carried out by Martine Cocaud,¹¹ this practical school was aimed

⁵ On this subject, see Francisco Cobo Romero and Teresa María Ortega López, “Menos piano y más campo. La educación agraria de las españolas (1900-1930)” in *Jornaleras, campesinas y agricultoras [...]*, 215-238.

⁶ Translation ours

⁷ *Ibid.*, 220.

⁸ The author was a French journalist and politician.

⁹ On this subject, see Gubin, “Femmes,” 221-244.

¹⁰ See the article on Marie Maugeret written by Christine Bard, in the *Dictionnaire des féministes. France XVIIIe-XXIe siècle*, ed. Christine Bard with the collaboration of Sylvie Chaperon (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2017), 966-969. Here is how Christine Bard analyses the opening of the Jeanne d’Arc Agronomic Institute by Marie Maugeret, 968: “At the same time, Marie Maugeret opened the Jeanne d’Arc Agronomic Institute. In so doing, she wanted to defend the rural France from which she came and to free it, she wrote, from ‘the weeds that have invaded it, like ryegrass and thistles’, and to revive the rural race, faithful ‘to the pure air of the fields, the morning dew and the sun of our good Lord’, *La Réforme sociale*, vol. 2, 1909, 692.” (translation ours).

¹¹ Martine Cocaud, “L’Avenir de Perette. Les Premiers Établissements Féminins d’Agriculture : les Écoles Pratiques de Laiterie,” in the *Annales de Bretagne et des Pays de l’Ouest*, tome 106, no.1, (1999), 121-135,

<https://doi.org/10.3406/abpo.1999.4018>. This is how she describes this school and the education provided there: “Originally intended as a vocational school to train specialists in dairy production, this establishment gradually became an establishment

at young girls over 14 years of age and from “large farming families.” They received both theoretical and practical instruction, the latter being devoted to “handling milk, butter and cheese, and caring for the farmyard and the dairy cows.”

It is interesting to compare the Coëtlegon dairy school with the Trois-Croix farming school for boys. The former offered a six-month curriculum for girls, while the latter offered boys a more in-depth programme corresponding to one year’s training.¹² Another difference between the two schools concerned the setting in which the boys worked (the fields and cowshed), while the girls took care of the home and the farmyard. This gendered differentiation of the work area led Martine Cocard to discern the space assigned to the woman farmer hinted at in this programme: “it extends over a small area consisting of the house, the garden, the farmyard and the cowshed, and everything that takes place outside of these areas is the purview of Trois-Croix.”¹³ In short, the educational model established was based on a recognition of traditionally female activities and reproduced the usual dichotomy, namely the care of the house and small farmyard animals being devolved to women while men devoted themselves to outdoor work and the care of the cattle and the horses.

In England, a definite dynamic also existed with respect to women’s education. This was notably reflected in the founding of the Swanley College of Horticulture in Kent in 1887. Initially reserved for boys only, it opened to girls from 1890 onwards, and contributed to the development of the horticultural industry in the region. In the same vein, the Studley Agricultural and Horticultural College was founded in Warwickshire in 1898. These experiences in women’s agricultural education were disseminated in Spain, as demonstrated by Francisco Cobo Romero and Teresa María Ortega López, who cite, among other publications, the *Diario de Córdoba de Comercio, Industria, Administración y Avisos*, no. 15897, year LIV, of 8 July 1903. An article entitled “La mujer agricultora” featured a description of the educational programme for girls studying at the Swanley College of Horticulture and a comparison with the context in Spain.¹⁴ And what

for all women farmers. It continued to offer technical education but superimposed household and moral instruction, since the Republic wanted young women to be vectors of integration for the rural world.” (translation ours).

¹² Cocard, *L’Avenir de Perette*, 129.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Diario de Córdoba de Comercio, Industria, Administración y Avisos*, no. 15897, year LIV, 8 July 1903.

precisely was the situation of the education and work of rural Spanish women at this time?

The Spanish context

In Spain, according to the 1860 census figures,¹⁵ the population totalled 15,673,536 inhabitants, 7,907,973 of whom were women, thus representing a ratio of 50.45% women to 49.55% men. It was this female population, mainly agricultural, that Spanish legislators and politicians wanted to train during the 19th and early 20th centuries, following the experiments carried out abroad in the field of agricultural education for women.

The legislative discourse

From a chronological perspective, it is worth highlighting the importance of the Constitution of Cadiz in the history of education in Spain. Promulgated in 1812, this was the country's first liberal constitution, set within the context of the liberal revolution that Spain underwent during the 19th century, and strongly influenced by the French constitutions.¹⁶

With regard to education, the Constitution of 1812 addressed the issue of public education in Title IX (Articles 366 to 371). According to the analysis by Jean-Louis Guereña,¹⁷ the Constitution "envisages the

¹⁵ Folguera Crespo "¿Hubo?", 421.

¹⁶ On this subject, see the article by Alfredo Gallego Anabirte, "Les facultés de droit espagnoles et l'influence française, en particulier dans le domaine du droit public, aux XVIIIème et XIXème siècles", *Revue d'histoire des Facultés de droit et de la science juridique*, n°15, *Actes des journées d'études des 19 et 20 novembre 1993 : L'influence des Facultés françaises de droit Outre-Mer et à l'étranger*, Paris, 1994, p.113-148, p. 126: "The title devoted to public education is taken from the French Constitution of 1795; the Parliaments' competence in matters of public education (Article 370) is inspired by Article 54 of the Constitution of 1793; the proclamation of the uniformity of education throughout the Kingdom (Article 368) can be found in Title 1 of the French Constitution of 1791; Articles 296, 297 and 298 of the French Constitution of 1795 gave rise to Articles 367 and 369 of the Constitution of Cadiz, which prescribe the establishment of primary schools in all villages, and refer to the regulation of universities and the creation of a competent body in this matter." (translation ours).

¹⁷ Jean-Louis Guereña, "L'État et l'école au XIXe siècle," in *École et société en Espagne et en Amérique latine (XVIIIe-XXe siècles)*, edited by Jean-René Aymes, Eve-Marie Fell; Jean-Louis Guereña (Tours: Presses universitaires François Rabelais, Coll. Études hispaniques V, 1983), 44.

generalisation of education through the establishment of a dense network of schools [...] establishes uniformity and centralisation [...] with the creation of a *Dirección general de estudios*, the embryo of an administrative apparatus.”

Legislators and educational theorists seemed to agree on the need for the participation of women in the modernisation of Spanish society, while at the same time proposing an educational project that, as historian Pilar Folguera pointed out, tended to reinforce gender inequalities.¹⁸ Indeed, the analysis of the different types of discourse on women’s education in general, and on the education of rural women in particular, reflected the social hierarchy in force in 19th-century Spain, in which women occupied a subordinate position.

Among the legislative discourses, we can mention several texts by way of example and in chronological order. These include the Quintana Report of 1814¹⁹; the draft education regulations of 1822; the *Plan y reglamento de escuelas de primeras letras del reino* approved by royal decree in 1825; the law of 1838; and the Concordat between the Spanish State and the Holy See signed in 1851 and reinforced by the royal decree of 1852 entrusting the education of girls to the religious orders. These legislative texts were supplemented by others written by educational theorists. One notable example is the treatise *La riqueza agrícola y pecuaria en España* (1896) by Pío Cerrada Martín, an academic specialised in agriculture and who advocated an ambitious educational reform that would take into account girls and young women.

All of these discourses were based on a common logic: they encouraged the education of girls, detailed the educational programme developed for them, and praised its benefits. However, the education provided to girls differed from that provided to boys, as illustrated by article 198 of Title XVIII on the education of girls in the *Plan y reglamento de escuelas de primeras letras del reino*.²⁰

¹⁸ Folguera Crespo, “¿Hubo?,” 428: “El proyecto educativo, no obstante, está dirigido a reforzar las diferencias de género entre hombres y mujeres.”

¹⁹ This was a draft decree on the improvement of public education presented to the Parliaments by the Commission on Public Education chaired by Quintana.

²⁰ ART. 198. En las Escuelas de primera clase, además de la enseñanza cristiana por los libros que van señalados, la de leer por lo menos en los catecismos, y escribir medianamente, se enseñarán las labores propias del sexo; á saber: hacer calceta, cortar y coser las ropas comunes de uso, bordar y hacer encajes, ú otras que suelen enseñarse a las niñas. En las de segunda se suprimirán los encajes, y el bordado en las de tercera y cuarta; limitando y proporcionando gradualmente esta instrucción, y acomodándola al uso, costumbres, necesidades y estado civil y económico de los pueblos.

The educational programme for girls comprised a part in common with that for boys. It was based on the principles of the Christian faith (*para que las niñas no carezcan de la buena educación en los rudimentos de la Fe católica*), on the resulting standards of moral conduct (*en las reglas del bien obrar, en el ejercicio de las virtudes*), and integrated learning to read and write. Its main objective was the moral education of children. This common pedagogical base also comprised instruction specifically for girls referred to as *labores propias de su sexo*, corresponding to a series of household tasks such as sewing, embroidery and laundry. According to Pilar Crespo Folguera's analysis, while the discourse on education did indeed reflect the gendered distribution of tasks, it should be noted that a certain latitude was nevertheless left to those implementing education policies on a practical level. Indeed, in the *Plan y reglamento de escuelas de primeras letras del reino*, the law advocated abandoning the learning of certain household tasks (lacemaking and embroidery) at the end of primary school in order to adapt the girls' educational programme to the social and economic environment in which they lived.

This observation by the law on the need to adapt the female educational programme to the social and economic context can be linked with the following reflection by Danièle Bussy-Genevois on women's work: "By taking advantage of sources that were neglected or unknown until recently, the researchers have shown that, in the long term, the activity of women could not be reduced to complementary tasks that were looked down upon and often fixed within a tradition that tended to excuse all exploitation."²¹

The legislative discourses on women's education that appeared over the next few years followed the pattern described above, i.e. an educational base common to both boys and girls with specificities related to the gendered division of labour. It was within this context that the Moyano Law was adopted in 1857, remaining in force until 1970. Its importance resided in its aim of making primary education compulsory for all Spaniards. Several articles dealt with the education of women, in particular Article 100, which provided for the establishment of public elementary schools for boys and girls in every village with over 500 inhabitants.²² Other relevant provisions included the establishment of teacher training colleges ("normal schools") for girls (Article 114), the knowledge required for women to become primary school teachers, less extensive than that required for men (Articles 68 to 71), and the question

²¹ Bussy-Genevois, "Propos," 2 (translation ours).

²² Art. 100. En todo pueblo de 500 almas habrá necesariamente una Escuela pública elemental de niños, y otra, aunque sea incompleta, de niñas.

of the wages of female primary school teachers, lower than those of their male colleagues (Article 194).

Like the legislative discourses cited above, the Moyano Law included the following subjects for the first year of primary education: Christian doctrine, reading, writing, the rudiments of grammar, arithmetic and agriculture (the latter for boys only), industry and commerce, this subject being replaced for girls by “gender-specific subjects” (*labores propias de su sexo*). The curriculum for the last year of primary education comprised the following: geometric drawing and land surveying, the rudiments of history and geography (especially of Spain), and basic notions of physics, natural history and geometry. Land surveying was not taught in girls’ schools, while natural history and geometry were replaced by “gender-specific subjects”, i.e. drawing, and the basics of household hygiene. With regard to the issue of the education of girls in the farming world, it is interesting to note that the subjects directly related to the family and social environment of rural women and their territorial and spatial anchoring were abandoned in favour of learning tasks considered as “gender-specific” (embroidery) but less essential to their work.

The impact of the Moyano Law on education remained small as evidenced, for example, by the figures for literacy levels in Spain in 1887. According to Geraldine Scanlon’s analysis,²³ the Moyano Law was nevertheless beneficial for women’s education in Spain, with women primary school teachers in particular receiving better training under Article 114,²⁴ which encouraged the opening of teacher training colleges for them.

With regard to women’s education in rural Spain, during the second half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th centuries, the most interesting initiatives were taken by agricultural engineers and educational theorists. They addressed the issue of the exodus of women from rural areas, which they believed was largely due to the lack of education for young rural women. The question of the essential education of young women in the rural world and their key role alongside their husbands was echoed in an article published in the newspaper *El Progreso Agrícola y Pecuario*, which specialised in issues of the rural world. Indeed, the author of the article pointed out that “the ploughman, more than any other [man], needs the cooperation of a wife and housekeeper who, in addition to knowing

²³ See the article by Geraldine Scanlon, “La mujer y la instrucción pública: de la ley Moyano a la II.a República”, in *Historia de la educación: revista interuniversitaria*, vol. 6, Salamanca, (1987), 193-209.

²⁴ See Article 114 of the Moyano Law.