

■ Article

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Adding names, stirring history: onomastic strategies for the recovery of 19th-century women philosophers in Mexico

*Acrescentando nomes, agitando a história:
estratégias onomásticas para a recuperação
de filósofas mexicanas do século XIX*

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ABSTRACT: In this paper, I argue for the inclusion of women's names in the history of philosophy, emphasizing naming as a crucial step in recovering and acknowledging the contributions of historically marginalized women philosophers. Drawing on Sarah Hutton's 'add and stir' strategy, I suggest that the simple act of naming women philosophers is essential for their recovery, even when their works have been lost or forgotten. I introduce the concept of 'antionomastics' to study the deliberate erasure of names, contrasting it with a 'philosophical onomastics', which focuses on recovering and preserving these names. Using this framework, I examine the omission of women philosophers in Mexican history of philosophy, arguing that recognizing and preserving women's names is not only an act of recovery but also a necessary precursor to their inclusion in historical narratives. Through a case study on Laureana Wright, a XIX century Mexican feminist, thinker, and journalist, I show the importance of biographical records in philosophical onomastics. Wright's biographical work on remarkable Mexican women, along with her own biography and essays, exemplifies how this strategy can be effectively applied in the Mexican context to ensure the visibility and acknowledgment of women's contributions to philosophy.

Keywords: women philosophers, history of Mexican philosophy in the 19th century, names, 'add and stir' strategy, onomastics.

RESUMO: Neste artigo, defendo a inclusão dos nomes de mulheres na história da filosofia, enfatizando a nomeação como um passo crucial para recuperar e reconhecer as contribuições de filósofas historicamente marginalizadas. Inspirando-me na estratégia de "adicionar e misturar" de Sarah Hutton, sugiro que o simples ato de nomear filósofas é essencial para sua recuperação, mesmo quando suas obras foram perdidas ou esquecidas. Introduzo o conceito de "antionomástica" para estudar o apagamento deliberado de nomes, contrastando-o com uma "onomástica filosófica", que se concentra na recuperação e preservação desses nomes. Usando essa estrutura, examino a omissão de filósofas na história da filosofia mexicana, argumentando que reconhecer e preservar os nomes das mulheres não é apenas um ato de recuperação, mas também um precursor necessário para sua inclusão em narrativas históricas. Por meio de um estudo de

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caso sobre Laureana Wright, feminista, pensadora e jornalista mexicana do século XIX, mostro a importância dos registros biográficos na onomástica filosófica. O trabalho biográfico de Wright sobre mulheres mexicanas notáveis, juntamente com sua própria biografia e ensaios, exemplifica como essa estratégia pode ser aplicada eficazmente no contexto mexicano para garantir a visibilidade e o reconhecimento das contribuições das mulheres para a filosofia.

Palavras-chaves: mulheres filósofas, história da filosofia mexicana no século XIX, nomes, estratégia de “adicionar e misturar”, onomástica.

► 1 Introduction: add and stir

In one of her latest diagnoses, Sarah Hutton (2022) proposes a Renaissance regarding the history of women philosophers. The notion “Renaissance” (related to the historical period) allows her to describe the current situation of studies on Women Philosophers of the past. According to Hutton, a new renaissance in the history of philosophy is present, despite the fact that we are still facing the oblivion into which most women philosophers have fallen. Based on this, Hutton proposes that to understand the current situation regarding the history and philosophical historiography of women it is necessary to revisit similar periods in the history of philosophy. This history is full of ‘lost philosophy’. Many philosophers who are now familiar to us, such as Plato or Plotinus –who according to Saffrey (1996) was only a name during the Middle Ages– were ‘lost’ for centuries and later recovered (1996, p. 16).

In this sense, the humanist project of recovering texts and philosophies of the past can shed light on the recovery of women philosophers. Hutton stresses that the historical-contextual approach to philosophy has been crucial in this operation¹. This approach assumes that to understand the philosophy and arguments of women philosophers of the past, it is essential to reconstruct the context in which they practiced philosophy. Two assumptions of this approach are historical distance and rejection of presentism. This would avoid, according to Hutton, distorting their understanding. Thus, we should examine the philosophy of the past on its own terms (p. 12).

In the aforementioned text, Sarah Hutton revisits the ‘add and stir’ strategy² regarding the history of women philosophers. While it is true that before this the standard position was that one cannot simply name women philosophers, ‘add’ them to the standard narrative of the history of philosophy and ‘mix’ them, Hutton’s new proposal seems to indicate that the mere act of naming is already an act of recovery. I quote in extenso:

The Renaissance of women’s philosophy has only just begun. We must go on digging to find more—not just for the ones of whose names we know, but the unknown philosophers. Not just the philosophers of England, France, Germany and Italy, but the philosophers of all countries and all times. It will take major work to discover the women of South America, India, China, Japan and Africa. There is more evidence than one might think that women philosophers existed. And armed with that knowledge, and the means to excavate, who knows what may be found? Who knows, may be new philosophical writings will come to light. Of

¹ “Historians of philosophy like Karen Green, Ruth Hagengruber, Jacqueline Broad and others (myself included) asked (...) what philosophy women produced, and how they achieved what they did. Furthermore, this involved not merely focusing on their arguments, or what were taken to be their arguments, or assimilating their work to the present. Rather, the approach taken paid attention to the context in which women philosophized and investigated the philosophical and social circumstances in which they philosophized” (Hutton, 2022, p. 11).

² See Harding (1987 and 1995) and Morton (1994). These articles reject the strategy for social sciences, musical education, and science and technology studies. Hutton’s strategy would be contrary to that proposed by Witt and Shapiro, for whom “it is not enough to simply add a woman philosopher or two to the reading list”... According to Shapiro, we should provide internal reasons for the inclusion of women philosophers “rather than relying on a feminist motivation on the part of the teacher or editor. The history of philosophy is a history and we need to find a plot that includes new female characters.” (2023)

course, this exciting prospect must be tempered by the discouraging fact that the work of many—maybe most—philosophical women will never be recovered, since what they thought was not recorded, or lost. But just knowing their names, will make a difference to perceptions of women’s capacities, and this, indirectly, will make a difference to perceptions and practice in philosophy. Even if many women philosophers of the past are just names, even if the best we can do is to compile a list their names, knowing the names of women who philosophized testifies to their existence. It overturns the assumption that women didn’t do philosophy, that women didn’t have brains enough to do philosophy; or that those who did were exceptional for their sex. Just as the stars in the night sky whose light died before it reached the viewers on earth are key evidence for constructing the history of the universe, so also the names of women philosophers are testimony to the history of female intellectual culture, even if their philosophy is no more. It is commonly said that when restoring women to visibility, ‘you can’t just add women and stir’—you can’t just add them in like ingredients in a recipe, because this does not substantially change anything. But I want to suggest that you can in fact ‘add women and stir’. But you have to add enough of them to change the recipe—few won’t make any difference. (Hutton, 2022, p. 17)

In what follows, I intend to investigate whether Hutton’s strategy might be applied to Mexican history of philosophy. For that purpose, I divide the paper into three parts. In the first part, I analyse what it means to have a proper name within a culture and what it signifies to erase or forget that name. I propose that forgetting is a way of denying the existence of the person whose name is omitted. In the second part, I explore how what I call ‘antionomastics’ exposes the erasure of Mexican women philosophers’ names (following Del Río 2019) within a patriarchal narrative of the history of philosophy in Mexico, as well as in Anglo-Saxon reference works. Lastly, in the third part, I present a case study that demonstrates the benefits of philosophical onomastics (searching for names through biographical models from the past). The case study focuses on Laureana Wright a XIX century Mexican feminist, thinker, and journalist. Wright’s biographical work on remarkable Mexican women, along with her biography and essays, exemplifies how this strategy can be effectively applied in the Mexican context to ensure the visibility and acknowledgment of women’s contributions to philosophy.

► 2 Proper names

Referring to a philosopher by name seems more or less evident in the history of philosophy, usually (although not always) organized through a series of references to (male) philosophers (in a ‘golden chain’ of names): Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, etc. If we ask what a name is, we could turn to Onomastics, the discipline that studies names. The name denotes a “unique entity at the level of linguistic convention established to make it psychosocially relevant within the level of a basic category” (qt. by Van Langendonck and Van de Velde, 2016, p. 18). They function as elements to identify someone or something that exists. For example, London identifies an entity within the category ‘city’. According to Van Langendonck and Van de Velde “personal names are arguably the most prototypical names. The number and types of names given to people are very specific to culture, as are the principles that guide the choice of a name” (2016, p. 33). From the historical point of view, Katharina Leibring defines each person’s name (the given name), as “the name (or those names) bestowed on an individual person, in most instances a very young child, with the purpose of individualizing this child; to separate him or her as a person from other people in the vicinity” (Leibring, 2016, p. 200).

One of the functions of a personal name is to individualize and integrate a person within their family and social environment. According to Leibring, first names often reflect the male dominance characteristic of patriarchal societies. In many languages and cultures, there is a clear division in the semantic content of names, with positive or desirable qualities attributed differently to men and women. Qualities such as strength, power, and aggression are commonly associated with masculine names, while feminine names often emphasize beauty and tranquillity. Most European naming systems reflect this division between male and female names. Since men have historically been seen as the standard in European societies, it is not surprising that many female names are derived from male names, such as the Latin 'Julia' from 'Julius'. In addition, historically, fewer women's names are preserved than men's, and most names emanate from people belonging to the upper classes of a society (pp. 200 and ff).

On the other hand, Socio-onomastics demonstrates that the emergence of individual names and naming categories is always rooted in cultural and social contexts. In other words, names are not just elements of language; they are integral to society and culture. Names are always created through the interaction between people, their linguistic community, and their environment. People assign names to referents they deem worth naming. By naming, they assert control over their surroundings, leaving their mark and, in turn, making it a part of their culture (Ainiala, 2016, p. 371). Based on the above, we could consider what it means to erase and forget a name: excluding an entity from the society or culture to which it belonged would mean denying its existence.

Both O'Neill (1998) and Ebbersemeyer (2020) have shown how the oblivion of women philosophers involves the intentional erasure of their names in the histories of philosophy in the second half of the eighteenth century and during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While O'Neill shows how the texts of modern women philosophers disappear from circulation and are 'forgotten', Ebbersemeyer focuses on German catalogues or lexicons of intellectually active women whose names, after being recorded in them, are forgotten, or erased in the histories of philosophy in the 19th century. I will come back to this later. In this text, I will not discuss O'Neill's approach (why publications disappear), but one similar to Ebbersmeyer's (why even the names of women philosophers disappear). To this end, I will propose an Anti-onomastics that studies this phenomenon and a Philosophical Onomastics that recovers them. If Onomastics is the science that studies names, forgetting them could be studied by an Anti-onomastics. Anti-onomastics would study the erasure of the names of people and places.

► 3 Anti-onomastics

In general, it is important to study the erasure of the names of people and places. This study is even more important in the case of women philosophers because, as Hutton points out, although the work of recovering women philosophers has made important progress, especially for modern women philosophers, we could fall into a 'new amnesia' in which it is forgotten that it is not 'natural' for women to be in this history (Hutton, 2019) and without attention the project would decline, as seems to have happened with certain feminist efforts in Mexico in the nineteenth century.

Anti-onomastics would aim to document the interplay between names and the societies that erase or forget them, while also exploring the reasons behind this oblivion. A potential method in Anti-onomastics could involve tracing back through history to identify where women philosophers or women engaged in philosophical practices were once named, and then reconstructing the process by which their names fell into obscurity.

For example, Ebbersmeyer (2020) shows that mentions of women in the history of German philosophy gradually disappeared during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is established that before these

centuries (and the emergence of the general histories of philosophy), various catalogues and lexicons compiled mentions of various women philosophers of antiquity and sometimes included some thinkers from more recent times. As the constitution of post-Renaissance national cultures progressed, these catalogues took on more local approaches, compiling names and news about German women.

According to Ebbersmeyer, it is possible to prove that women philosophers were a topic of discussion in Germany before 1800. This discussion contrasts with the silence about women in subsequent general histories of philosophy. The article concludes that there is a relationship between this exclusion and the women's emancipation movement at the end of the nineteenth century, which sought to defend their right to university education (Ebbersmeyer, 2020).

For Mexico's case, we can take as a starting point Fanny del Río's article "Où sont les femmes dans les histoires de la philosophie au Mexique ? Un cas d'injustice épistémique". In this text she studies 18 of the most prominent histories of philosophy in the 20th and 21st centuries in Mexico. She shows that

in the 75 years that separate the publication of *History of Philosophy in Mexico* by Samuel Ramos (1943) from *Philosophy in Mexico in the Twentieth Century* by Gustavo Leyva (2018) – Two works that can be considered respectively as the first and the last historical synthesis of Mexican philosophy published to the present day – it can be observed that the number of women philosophers included in the index of each of the two works has remained stationary (0 in 1943, 1 in 2018) (Del Río, 2019, p. 66).

The reasons for women's exclusion in these histories are interpreted by Del Río within the framework of an epistemic injustice, following Fricker, as the misogyny of the 'founding fathers' of Mexican Philosophy disqualifies and silences female philosophical practices. For example, José Gaos, a prominent Spanish philosopher exiled in Mexico after the Spanish Civil War, who promoted the professionalization of philosophy at the National University of Mexico. Del Río affirms that Gaos "at no time recognizes the omission of philosophical feminism, gender or the fight for women's equality. However, these themes were already current at the time of the first edition (of his book), having been addressed in our country by thinkers such as Paula Gómez Alonzo, Rosario Castellanos and Vera Yamuni" (2019, p. 68).

This problem is perhaps more acute if we examine the second half of the 20th century, when it is evident that in Mexico there were a significant number of women who dedicated themselves professionally to philosophy (although the proportion between men and women remains unequal). Cortina y Quezada provide the following data for the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM):

In the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters there are 1,279 professors, of whom 682, or 53%, are women. The percentage of women researchers at the Institute of Philological Research was 58% (109 out of 187 researchers) and 59% at the Institute of Historical Research (47 out of 79 researchers). However, the Institute for Philosophical Research reversed the trend, with only 23 or 39% of 59 researchers, which is parallel to the Facultad de Filosofía y Letras teaching staff in Philosophy: out of 190 professors, only 69, or 36%, were women in the fall of 2020. (Cortina y Quezada, 2021, p. 15).

This fact (that there are 92 women academics in the philosophy departments only at UNAM) is not reflected, however, in the most recent history of philosophy of the Mexican twentieth century written by Gustavo Leyva in 2018, as shown in Table 1.

Let us consider another example of Anti-onomastics before trying to apply the method and find the names of women who had intellectual practices in Mexico: *A companion to Latin American Philosophy* (2010). It is important to bear in mind that these reference works, such as the histories of philosophy in

Table 1. Del Río's analysis of the ratio men/women named in Histories of Mexican Philosophy written between 1943 and 2018*.

Work/Author	Table of contents or in content	Bibliography	Onomastic index
History of Philosophy in Mexico, Samuel Ramos	Men: 10 Women: 0	Men: 55 Women: 1	Men: 315 Women: 0
On Mexican Philosophy, José Gaos	Men: 47 Women: 5		
Mexican Philosophy of Our Days, José Gaos	Men: 7 (in preface 31) Women: 0 (in preface 0)		
Studies in the History of Philosophy in Mexico, Mario de la Cueva	Men: 36 Women: 0	Men: 29 Women: 1	
Mexican Philosophy in its Men and in its Texts, Antonio Ibargüengoitia	Men: 16 Women: 0		
History of Philosophy in Mexico, Francisco G. Díaz	Men: 44 Women: 0		
Mexican Philosophical Summa, Antonio Ibargüengoitia	Men: 37 Women: 2	Men: 77 Women: 0	
An Approach to the History of Philosophical Ideas in Mexico. Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries, Carmen Rovira	Men: 32 Women: 0		Men: 86 Women: 3
Mexican Philosophers of the Twentieth Century, Antonio Ibargüengoitia.	Men: 62 Women: 9		
History of Philosophy in Mexico, José Manuel Villalpando Nava	Men: 59 Women: 8		Men: 442 Women: 17
Historical Sketch of Mexican Philosophy (Twentieth Century) and Other Essays, Gabriel Vargas.	Men: 7 Women: 0	Men: 13 Women: 2	
The owl and the snake. Essay on Philosophy in Mexico in the Twentieth Century, Guillermo Hurtado	Men: 13 Women: 0	Men: 159 Women: 7	Men: 370 Women: 19
Latin American, Caribbean and "Latino" Philosophical Thought [1300–2000], Enrique Dussel, Eduardo Mendieta, Carmen Bohórquez	Men: 20 Women: 2		
Mexican Philosophers of the Twentieth Century, Mario Magallón Anaya	Men: 6 Women: 0	Men: 80 Women: 8	
Philosophy in Mexico in the Twentieth Century. Notes by a participant, Carlos Pereda.	Men: 31 Women: 9	Men: 171 Women: 50	Men: 480 Women: 51
One Hundred Years of Philosophy in Latin America (1910-2010), Margarita Valdés (ed.).	Men: 181 Women: 19	Men: 54 Women: 8	Men: 54 Women: 8
Philosophy in Mexico in the Twentieth Century, Gustavo Leyva	Men: 15 Women: 1		Men: 1131 Women: 85

*Río, Fanny del. «Où sont les femmes dans les histoires de la philosophie au Mexique ? Un cas d'injustice épistémique». *Diogenes* 267-268, n.o 3-4 (2019): 66-84. <https://doi.org/10.3917/dio.267.0066>.

Mexico or the companions in the Anglo-Saxon tradition, are responsible for selecting and, therefore, recording the names of people they consider valuable enough to be included in the history of philosophy. In this companion, the number of women named in the onomastic index is 26 (see Table 2).

Table 2. Number of women named in the onomastic index of *A companion to Latin American Philosophy*.*

Alcoff, Linda Martin	Anzaldúa, Gloria
Benítez, Laura	Butler, Judith
Castellanos, Rosario	Cohn, Priscilla
Cruz, Sor Juana Inés de la	D'Ottaviano, Itala
Ezcurdia, Maite	Femenías, María Luisa
Isabella of Castile	Glanz, Margo
Grau, Olga	Hierro, Graciela
Lugones, María	Pérez, Ana Rosa
Poniatowska, Elena	Pratt, Mary Louise
Richard, Nelly	Rivera Cusicanqui, Silvia
Rodríguez, Ileana	Schutte, Ofelia
Seed, Patricia	Suárez, Ursula
Thatcher, Margaret	Zambrano, María

* Nuccetelli, Susana, Ofelia Schutte, y Otávio Bueno, eds. *A companion to Latin American philosophy*. Blackwell companions to philosophy 44. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

It is worth noting that when reviewing the content of the chapters, particularly those discussing the philosophy of science in Latin America, other women like Lourdes Valdivia, Margarita Ponce, and Rachel Laudan are mentioned, even though they do not appear in the index. This omission is important because, being a reference work, its index does not *refer* to their names and therefore their work is made invisible, as Nathalie Heinich, feminist and member of the Centre National pour la Recherche Scientifique de France, shows. She argues that the invisibilization of women academics is what perpetuates gender inequality in universities. Heinich runs a database on the invisibilization of women's thought (*Banque de données sur l'invisibilisation de la pensée des femmes*³), open to women in academia who have seen their work made invisible by the omission of citations and omission in onomastic indexes, etc.

This *Companion* is divided into three sections that seek to give a historical, thematic and sub disciplinary account of the development of philosophy in Latin America and it is completed with a biographical section in which forty persons who practiced philosophy in Latin America have been selected. Of the 40, two are women, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz and Ofelia Schutte, one of the editors of the volume (see Table 3).

The editors believe that these biographies will appeal to readers who are unfamiliar with the figures of Latin American philosophy. They suggest that a fully biographical chapter can help bridge the gap in knowledge about the lives and works of philosophers, broadly interpreted to include early philosophical thinkers. An intriguing point: the list features individuals not typically regarded as philosophers, such

³ https://cral.ehess.fr/system/files/2021-02/invisibilisation_6_banque_de_donne_es_anonymise_e_23_6_2020.pdf and <https://sicsic.hypotheses.org>

Table 3. Names in the biographical section of *A companion to Latin American Philosophy**.

Acosta, José de (1539–1600)	Alberdi, Juan Bautista (1810–1884)
Bello, Andrés (1781–1865)	Bilbao, Francisco (1823–1865)
Bolívar, Simón (1783–1830)	Casas, Bartolomé de las (1484–1566)
Caso, Antonio (1883–1946)	Cruz, Sor Juana Inés de la (1651–95)
da Costa, Newton Carneiro Affonso (b. 1929)	Dussel, Enrique (b. 1934)
Fronidzi, Risieri (1910–1983)	Gaos, Joseph (1900–1969)
González Prada, Manuel (1848–1918)	Gracia, Jorge J. E. (b. 1942)
Haya de la Torre, Victor Raúl (1895–1979)	Hostos, Eugenio María de (1839–1903)
Engineers, José (1877–1925)	Korn, Alejandro (1860–1936)
Lastarria, José Victorino (1817–1888)	Lemos, Miguel (1854–1917)
Mariátegui, José Carlos (1895–1930)	Martí, José (1853–1895)
Méndez Sierra, Justo (1848–1912)	Mora, José María Luis (1794–1850)
Miró Quesada, Francisco (b. 1918)	Rabossi, Eduardo (1930–2005)
Ramos, Samuel (1897–1959)	Rodó, José Enrique (1872–1917)
Romero, Francisco (1891–1962)	Sahagún, Fray Bernardino de (1499–1590)
Salazar Bondy, Augusto (1925–1974)	Sarmiento, Domingo Faustino (1811–1888)
Ophelia Schutte (b. 1945)	Sepúlveda, Juan Ginés de (ca. 1494–1573)
Torretti, Roberto (b. 1930)	Vasconcelos, José (1882–1959)
Vaz Ferreira, Carlos (1872–1958)	Villoro, Luis (b. 1922)
Vitoria, Francisco de (ca. 1483–1546)	Zea Aguilar, Leopoldo (1912–2004)

* Nuccetelli, Susana, Ofelia Schutte, y Otávio Bueno, eds. *A companion to Latin American philosophy*. Blackwell companions to philosophy 44. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.

as Simón Bolívar, the political leader who led the current countries of Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Panama, and Bolivia to independence from the Spanish Empire. Despite the *Companion's* broad inclusion criteria, which could have been applied to highlight women engaged in philosophical practices in Latin America before the 20th century, these criteria are not extended to women. For instance, while there is a chapter on feminism, it does not influence this biographical section. Additionally, the names of feminist philosophers are also absent from the onomastic index: Ana María Bach, Alicia Gianella, Clara Kushnir, Diana Maffía, Margarita Roulet, María Spadaro, María Isabel Santa Cruz, María Pía Lara, María Herrera, Margarita Valdés, Gloria Comesaña-Santalices, and Laura Gioscia.

The inclusion criteria for the biographical chapter in this Companion are:

- (1) For all the authors, having done remarkable work in some of the main themes, movements and/or disciplines that make up Latin American philosophy.
- (2) For authors before 1900, to be philosophers or to be non-philosopher essayists writing on philosophical subjects.
- (3) For post-1900 authors, to be academic philosophers born before 1950 working in Latin America or to write on philosophical topics related to Latin America.

Clearly these broad criteria could have included feminist essayists or journalists who deal with philosophical issues in periodicals, such as Laureana Wright, or academics who worked in universities in the twentieth century. In what follows, I give an example of my Philosophical Onomastics, following the second criterion. In this sense, I will consider Philosophical Onomastics as the art or technique of naming the protagonists of the discipline and Anti-onomastics as the explanation for the failure of that art or technique that leads to oblivion. Both are intrinsically related.

► 4 Towards a philosophical onomastics. A case study: Laureana Wright

Philosophical Onomastics could start by uncovering the names of women who engaged in philosophical practices, drawing upon the biographical models found in catalogues of remarkable women, like those referenced by Ebbesmeyer. On the Mexican side, we find the work *Mujeres Mexicanas Notables* (*Remarkable Mexican Women*) by Laureana Wright. Little is known outside the scope of specialized studies of this feminist and journalist who worked on a series of biographies of women, some of them published in her weekly newspaper *Violetas del Anáhuac*. Her own biography appeared in the weekly written by her friend and colleague Matiana Murguía. Wright's biographies were collected posthumously in 1910. A total of 116 Mexican women are organized into four categories (distributed as follows: 30 indigenous, 27 colonial, 17 independent and 42 contemporary). We see how among them, Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz is one of the few familiar names. Another is that of Carmen Romero Rubio de Díaz, wife of the then president of Mexico, Porfirio Díaz. This act of naming women serves as a foundation for further research, much like Gilles Ménage's *History of Women Philosophers* laid the groundwork for Mary Ellen Waithe's pioneering efforts in her *History of Women Philosophers*.

The goal of the work, according to Wright, is the following: "faithful to our program of making all the notable contemporary Mexican women known to our compatriots, in order that they may honour and imitate their glorious example, we find ourselves in the necessity of making use of the right that our quality as chroniclers confers on us."⁴ (qtd. in Monges, 1997, p. 358) According to Graciela Monges: "this makes it explicit that the work has been written by a woman for other women, with the aim of 'honoring and imitating' these examples and showing what women can achieve." (1997, p. 358).

Although in various studies such as Guadalupe Hernández Aquino (2014) and Graciela Monges Nicolau (1997), she is referred to as a journalist, intellectual or feminist, Wright's work contains philosophical elements related to the inclusion criteria used in the *Companion*. Her biography was published in *Violetas del Anáhuac* on June 10th, 1888, written by her colleague Matiana Murguía. Laureana Wright was born on July 4, 1846, in Taxco, a small mining town in southern Mexico, but spent her childhood and adult life in Mexico City. Her mother was Eulalia González. Her father, Santiago Wright, a north American citizen, mine owner from a well-to-do family, who promotes her education, as she herself narrates in her essay *Erroneous Education of Women and Practical Means to Correct It*. According to Bolaño, her contemporary, "she received a careful private education, basically made up of learning English and French and the "first elements of enlightenment." (qtd. in Murguía, 1888, p. 314)

Around 1865 she wrote her first poems, marked by her patriotism, a trait that she retains in some of her other published poems⁵. In January 1868 she married Sebastian Kleinhans, an Alsatian. Bolaño says that she abandoned her literary work for a year to dedicate herself to her husband and home.

⁴ "Fieles a nuestro programa de hacer que conozcan de cerca nuestras compatriotas a todas las mexicanas notables contemporáneas, a fin de que las honren e imiten su glorioso ejemplo, nos vemos en la necesidad de usar del derecho que nuestra calidad de cronistas nos confiere".

⁵ Cfr. Pérez, L. M., 1889, *Poetas Hispano-Americanos*, ed. José María Rivas Groot, Casa Editorial de J. J. Pérez, México/Bogotá.

She had a daughter, Margarita. Wright died in 1896, after a series of illnesses that led her to leave the direction of *Violetas*.

Appreciated by the most recognized cultural and literary circles of nineteenth-century Mexico, she was a member or honorary member of the societies “Netzahualcoyotl” (1869), “El Provenir” (1872), “Liceo Hidalgo” (1873) and “Liceo Altamirano”. This meant recognition as a writer in prose and verse, according to Bolaño. Her weekly *Violetas del Anáhuac* stands out among the publications of the time. Directed by Wright and later by Mateana Murguía. According to Bolaño, “Laureana is distinguished in her writings by her highly progressive and liberal ideas, by her daring features and by her philosophical conclusions; qualities that if in a man are praiseworthy, in a woman are sufficient title to magnify her.” (qtd. in Murguía, “Laureana Wright de Kleinhans”, 1888, p. 315)

We have some news about her participation in the literary meetings of Liceo Hidalgo (see Alvarado, “Educación y superación femenina”) for example, between 1874 and 1875 she lectured on Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz. Among the periodicals in which she collaborates we find: *El Monitor Republicano*, *El Bien Público*, *El Álbum de la Mujer* (directed by Concepción Gimeno de Flaquer), *Violetas del Anáhuac*, *El Diario del Hogar* and *América Literaria*.

Violetas del Anáhuac was first published in December 1887, but it was not until January 1888 that it appeared under this name (before it was titled *Las Hijas del Anáhuac*). It was a literary newspaper, ‘Redactado por señoras’ whose director and administrator was Ignacio Pujol and in which Laureana served as literary director. According to Alvarado:

Despite the short duration of the latter (*Violetas del Anáhuac*) (from December 1887 to June 1889), due to the nature of its contents it represented an important advance over other publications of the same genre. It was also an excellent means for both its director and most of its collaborators, and even some readers, to express their ideas on various topics, among which educational issues stand out. Thus, through the pages of this weekly, this avant-garde women’s group would try to inform and transform the women of their time. (Alvarado 2005, p. 18).

The weekly “retained the ambivalent position of its predecessors, always fluctuating between preserving or transforming the female stereotype, (but) maintained a much more coherent and progressive editorial line than other related publications. Through its various articles, the weekly questioned the *modus vivendi* of Mexican women by proposing, almost obsessively, female education as the only vehicle for the desired transformation.” (Alvarado, 2005, p. 20). Some of its articles have philosophical content, such as the series on materialism and positivism that ran from March to April 1888.

After naming Wright through this Philosophical Onomastics, in what follows I will take a step forward and examine how this ambivalent position is the result of Wright’s reception of so-called Social Romanticism. This incorporates her into a series of transatlantic debates on the question of women (the so-called *querelle des femmes*). A trait she shares with other Latin American philosophers such as Nísia Floresta⁶.

The impetus for education is in line with two other essays by Laureana: *The Emancipation of Women through Study* and *Erroneous Education of Women and practical means of correcting it*. The first appeared in 1891 (in Imprenta Nueva) and the second, a year later. According to Alvarado, Laureana can be considered, based on these essays, as a theoretician of female education. The essays are “the first of their kind written by a Mexican woman.” (p. 20). In them, she upholds equality in intellectual capacity

⁶ Cfr. Pugliese, 2023

between men and women, the ability of women to pursue any profession and the right of women to practice them.

I will confine myself in this last part of my paper to presenting the general structure of the second essay as a first presentation of Wright's thought. As stated, I will claim that Wright's 'ambivalent position' is a direct result of the reception of social romanticism theories about women. The essay is divided into 22 chapters in which Wright presents several models of women, like Eugène Pelletan in his work *The Mother* (published in France in 1865 and translated into Spanish in 1875 by Mariano Blanch, in Barcelona⁷). In the first chapter, entitled "Contemporary Women", she recounts the advantages that the nineteenth century has given to women, but establishes that the only way to achieve true equality with men is through education, to which women are entitled.

A right that must be enforced. The accusations against women as incapable of enlightenment are due, not to their intellectual nature, but to vices in their education that Wright describes in the following twelve chapters where she presents a series of 'short stories' (which reproduce what Pelletan did in his book), where she shows women unhappy due to an absent or deficient education: The ignorant, indolent, melancholic, counterproductive, inexperienced, fanatical, indulgent, presumptuous, frivolous, flirtatious, or timorous woman is opposed to the enlightened woman, the housewife (*mujer del hogar*), the dignified woman, the wife, the mother, the artist/craftswoman, the scientist and the perfect woman. This essay closes with two chapters dedicated to reading and books, which are key to women's emancipation. According to Wright:

It is reserved to contemporary woman to show that our sex is not, as is commonly believed, neither incapable of receiving the enlightenment imparted to it, nor refractory to advancement, but suffers from an infinity of vices of education, which I shall endeavour to analyse as far as possible in other chapters, and which are only the offspring of the little cultivation which has hitherto been accorded to their intelligence. Democratic institutions have ostensibly liberated women; in practice, she can only be liberated by the intimate institutions of the home. (Wright, 2005, p. 63).⁸

The main cause of women's suffering is ignorance: "As I am persuaded that the main, and perhaps only, cause of the suffering, perversion, and nullity of our sex is ignorance, I will begin by introducing you to the ignorant woman, who unfortunately abounds and manifests itself under various phases in our society" (p. 64). There is a distinction between previous generations who were denied even the right to learn to read and write and that of Wright, who enjoys "relative freedom, without sufficient instruction" (p. 64). The ignorant woman, "as a daughter is nullity in the home; as a wife, inferiority led to servitude; as a mother, the darkness that clouds the minds of her children; as a social entity, the hindrance that has stopped and still stops the emergence of progress" (p. 66).

Within Laureana Wright's conception, the emancipation of women goes hand in hand with their purpose or mission in society. Regarding this position, it is possible to draw a link with the Social Romanticism movement that appeared in France years earlier.

The late nineteenth-century Mexico in which Wright wrote lived under the rule of President Porfirio Díaz. This period, known as '*El Porfiriato*', was characterized by a desire to modernize the country that led to the importation of European models of progress as social romanticism. This is a current that

⁷ Wright quotes Pelletan in this translation six times in her essay.

⁸ References to the pages are from Alvarado's edition.

⁹ "como hija, es la nulidad en el hogar; como esposa, la inferioridad llevada a la servidumbre; como madre, la oscuridad que anubla las inteligencias de sus hijos; como entidad social, la rémora que ha detenido y detiene todavía la aparición del progreso"

is characterized by considering that equality between the two sexes must be complete, however, this goes hand in hand with the conception of the role of women as redeemers of humanity through their sentimental inclinations:

Saint-Simon admits women in all jobs in all dignities. From the woman Messiah the disciples of Saint-Simon hope to obtain the sentimental inspirations that will stimulate their action. According to Barrault, the whole literary movement of the time had to arrive, through revelation and the feeling of a new morality, at this glorification of the ‘Mother’, obsessed by this idea of the mission of women in moral transformation. (Picard, 1947, 308).

Pelletan continues with these considerations. George Touroude’s work, *Deux républicains des progrès*, provides an in-depth look at Eugène Pelletan’s life and contributions, building on Edouard Petit’s 1913 studies. Pelletan, born into a Protestant and Masonic family in 1813, grew up in a politically active environment. Moving to Paris at 20, he launched his literary career, forming connections with prominent figures like Victor Hugo, George Sand and Alphonse de Lamartine.

Pelletan’s works, including *La Lampe Éteinte* and *Les Droits de l’Homme*, reflected his advocacy for social and political reforms, such as the separation of church and state and the abolition of slavery. He also engaged in the defence of women’s rights, notably in his 27-part study “La Mère” (1865), which supported women’s rights but revealed contradictions in his views. While promoting women’s emancipation through education, Pelletan simultaneously upheld traditional gender roles, believing women should primarily care for their families.

He pays a great deal of attention to the destiny of women, following the trends of his time, “notably social romanticism which makes the rehabilitation of woman the key to the regeneration of human society” (Crossley, “Le tort de la politique”, 159). But there is as Crossley affirms, a contradiction in his position:

The message that *The Mother* gives is therefore muddled and contradictory. On the one hand, Pelletan seems to encourage women to emancipate themselves: “Oh woman, whoever you are, whatever rank fate has placed you, make your own self [...]”. On the other hand, he takes up the old notion of the complementarity between man and woman: to each their own sphere of influence. (Crossley, 2001, 173).

While women are equal to men, they are primarily destined to take care of their home and family. Education is necessary to ensure success in these areas not only for women but also for their husbands and children. In addition to preserving her from misery in case she becomes a widow or is abandoned by her spouse. Wright drew on Pelletan’s ideas in her essay *On the Erroneous Education of Women and the Means to Correct It*, particularly her complex stance on women’s roles and education, influenced by Social Romanticism.

In “The Melancholic Woman”, Wright returns to that contradiction articulating a conceptual tension between presumed natural inclinations and the pursuit of equality through education. This ambivalence—suggesting both a critique and a partial reinforcement of essentialist assumptions—appears to reflect Wright’s engagement with the legacies of social romanticism. On the one hand, there is no anatomical difference that justifies the distinction between the capacities of man and woman, on the other hand, Wright states that:

Woman, more than man, has in herself the faculties of subtlety, perseverance, and self-denial, which give her the propensity to carry her passions and feelings to the maximum. That is why we so often see her go to exaggeration in whatever way she goes, and why we cherish the firm hope that the day she would emancipate from the obscurantism in which she generally vegetates, the day she is given a perfect education, she will lead to exaggeration that which is beneficial in every way¹⁰ (Wright, 2005, p. 71).

Nevertheless, Wright endorsement of women's education and the right to work in any profession or craft that she might choose is a revolutionary position for Mexico's 19th Century conservative traditions.

► 5 Conclusions and future research directions

It is worth noting here some parallels with the recovery projects of Latin American women philosophers of the nineteenth century: Nisia Floresta, Maria Firmina dos Reis and Josefina Álvares de Azevedo, among others. We find in them and in Wright a rational exercise that seeks to shape and interpret the world in such a way that women have the same rights as men, emphasizing the right to the same education. Their philosophical practice is carried out mainly through writing in newspapers and magazines. In Wright's case, within a dialogue with French Social Romanticism, her field of concern is clearly national, so her work can be considered a precursor of the philosophical reflections on education that would develop during the twentieth century in Mexico. In the essays rescued by Alvarado in 2005, Wright presents a series of traditional philosophical contents (such as a philosophy of education and a philosophy of history through a notion of human progress close to the Social Romanticism of thinkers such as Pelletan) and linked to feminism (a conception of female oppression, a participation in a Mexican *querelle des femmes*, in relation to the French *querelle des femmes* of the Second Empire and of republican 'feminism') that would earn her a place in the history of philosophy in nineteenth-century Mexico. The details of these aspects of her thought are awaiting detailed study.

This approach to a part of the history of women philosophers in Mexico in the nineteenth century through Wright's work was based on the idea of recovering names found in Hutton (2022). From there, a form of research was proposed based on detecting where the oblivion and omissions of women names in the history of Mexican philosophy began. The study of names and their oblivion was proposed as a way of recovery. It seems then that Philosophical Onomastics and Anti-onomastics could be the basis for the inclusion of women philosophers in the history of Latin American philosophy. Wright case is just a first example of the benefits of this methodology in Mexican history of philosophy¹¹.

¹⁰ "La mujer, más que el hombre, tiene en sí las facultades de la sutileza, la perseverancia y la abnegación, que le dan la propensión de llevar al máximo sus pasiones y sentimientos. Por eso la vemos con tanta frecuencia llegar hasta la exageración en cualquier camino que siga y por eso abrigamos la firme esperanza de que el día que se la emancipe del oscurantismo en que generalmente vegeta, el día en que se le dé una perfecta educación, ella llevará a la exageración lo benéfico en todos sentidos"

¹¹ I am grateful to Ricardo Salles and to my colleagues from the *Seminario de Investigadores* and the *Seminario de Historia de la Filosofía* at the Instituto de Investigaciones Filosóficas (UNAM) for their insightful and constructive feedback. The writing of this paper was supported by the project SECIHTI CF 2023-I-712, "Inclusión de las mujeres filósofas en la historia de la filosofía: nuevas metodologías." Previous versions of this text were presented at the online workshop "1000 Places in One World: New Voices 2024," at the *Segundo Encuentro de la ReLaFHi* at the Universidad Nacional de La Plata and within the PAPIIT-UNAM project IN401721, "Filósofas del pasado" in 2025 (in Spanish).

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Declaração de Disponibilidade de Dados:

Todo o conjunto de dados que dá suporte aos resultados deste estudo foi publicado no próprio artigo.

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