

The Woman Question, Equality, and the Right to Education: France, 1399 to 1793

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ABSTRACT – The Woman Question, Equality, and the Right to Education: France, 1399 to 1793¹. This article explores the relationship between the woman question and equality between the sexes regarding the right to education. The research was centered in France, from 1399 to the French Revolution. Three periods of cumulative creation were defined: that of Christine de Pizan, the first woman to live by her pen and support her family with it; that of Marie de Gournay and Poulain de la Barre, who elevated the term equality to a concept and principle; and that of the Marquis of Condorcet and Olympe de Gouges, who enriched the concept of equality with that of universality, thus extending to all human beings (Condorcet) and specifically to blacks (Condorcet and Gouges) all the rights claimed for women.

Keywords: Education. Women's Rights. Gender Equality.

RESUMO – Querela das Mulheres, Igualdade e Direito à Educação: França, 1399 a 1793. Este artigo trata da relação da querela das mulheres com a igualdade entre os sexos no que se refere ao direito à educação, definindo-se como campo de investigação a França, nos quase quatro séculos que vão de 1399 à Revolução Francesa, com distinção de três períodos de criação cumulativa: o de Christine de Pizan, a primeira mulher a viver da sua pena e a sustentar com ela a sua família; o de Marie de Gournay e Poulain de la Barre, que elevaram o termo igualdade a conceito e princípio; e o do marquês de Condorcet e Olympe de Gouges, que enriqueceram o conceito de igualdade com o de universalidade, estendendo a todos os seres humanos (Condorcet) e aos negros (Condorcet e Gouges) todos os direitos reivindicados para as mulheres.

Palavras-chave: Educação. Direito das Mulheres. Igualdade de Gênero.

Introduction

The starting point of this study is recalling some contributions that helped define the object and method of the investigation that resulted in this work.

Firstly, at the end of the first third of the 20th century, there was the following statement by the Brazilian jurist Pontes de Miranda (1933a, p. 39), in his booklet *Direito à Educação* (Right to Education): “The right to education is a child of the Centuries, although it was born [...] in our days”. Indeed it was a right born less than a century ago, but after a multi-secular gestation.

The English sociologist T. H. Marshall (1967, p. 63-66) supports this statement by presenting a triple concept of citizenship, whose elements are the civil, the political and the social rights. Taking into consideration the due elasticity, he assigns the formation period of each element respectively to the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries, further noting that the educational system and social services are the institutions most closely linked to the social element.

Secondly, the observation of jurist P. Bonavides (2017, p. 578, emphasis mine), that social, cultural, and economic rights, as well as collective rights that, germinated by the work of anti-liberal ideology and reflection, were introduced in the constitutionalism of distinct forms of social, “*They were born embraced to the principle of equality*, from which they cannot be separated, because to do so would be equivalent to dismember them from the *raison d’être* that supports and stimulates them. “Accordingly, referring to the famous triad of the French Revolution, Comparato (2015, p. 148) stated that “it was undoubtedly equality that represented the focal point of the revolutionary movement.” Thus, dealing with the right to education is necessarily also dealing with the principle of equality.

Thirdly, the author of the book *François Poulain de La Barre and the invention of modern equality* advocated the idea that the historical significance of Poulain, particularly in his first book, entitled *De l’égalité des deux sexes* (On the equality of the two sexes), of 1673, is “in the fact that he formulated a systematic egalitarian philosophy in which, for the first time, the idea of the natural equality of all human beings who possess reason is applied to *all* types of social relations”. The author also believed that Poulain “is perhaps the only thinker of the 17th century who formulated a truly universal concept of equality” (Stuurman², 2004, p. 296, emphasis of the author).

Fourthly, Simone de Beauvoir (1980, v. 1, p. 140) said that Poulain de La Barre concluded his work “by claiming for a solid instruction for women.” Pellegrin³ (2011, p. 45) in turn, noted that unlike several authors of the late 17th century who agreed that women needed instruction, but a differentiated instruction that suited their status, “Poulain articulates instruction and emancipation, the former being the privileged means of the latter.”

Finally, in fifth place, there are the words of É. Viennot (2012, p. 7 and 11): “From the end of the Middle Ages to the first decades of the 20th century, Europe first, then the world it influenced, were the stage of a gigantic polemic on the place and role of women in society,” a polemic that took place “around the double question of the equality (or inequality) of the sexes and the difference (or similarity) between them,” with emphasis on “clashes between supporters and opponents of female education, feminists and antifeminists.”

The previous quotations evidence, on the one hand, the emergence of education as a social right born in the 20th century, but gestated over centuries; and on the other hand, the centuries-old “woman question” in search of “equal rights between the sexes, especially regarding what, for Groult (2010, p. 11), was a major claim: access to education”, a battle that, according to the author, would last for centuries.

As for the struggle for equality, it should be remembered that in 1962 the renowned neoliberal economist Milton Friedman, from the University of Chicago, in his book *Capitalism and Freedom*, complained (protested? lamented?) that the key words had become, then, “welfare and equality instead of freedom”.

According to the author, in opposition to the 19th century liberal, who “considered the extension of freedom as the most effective means of promoting welfare and equality”, the 20th century liberal started to consider welfare and equality “either as prerequisites or alternatives to freedom”. Therefore the latter, in the name of welfare and equality, ended up “favoring the revival of the same policies of state intervention and paternalism against which classical liberalism had fought” (Friedman, 1985, p. 14). But there is one detail to highlight: Friedman ignored or did not remember that the Declaration of Independence of the United States, after an introductory paragraph, lists some truths taken as self-evident, figuring first, and as if underpinning the others, the principle of equality: “We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” (United States, 1776).

The French Revolution’s Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1789) put the principles of liberty and equality on the same level: “Article 1. Men are born and remain free and equal in rights [...]” (apud Rials, 1988, p. 22).

The *issue* that these initial considerations raise is whether this centuries-old woman question and the issues discussed there, especially that of gender equality, have contributed to the construction of what is currently called the right to education.

To start answering this question, there is the hypothesis formulated by M. É. Henneau (2015) and the path pointed out by G. Fraisse (2012). Henneau’s hypothesis (2012, p. 9) stated that since the Middle Ages France would have been “the cradle of the dispute [of the woman question], giving it the most original arguments and modes of expres-

sion.” The method suggested by Fraisse (2012, p. 163-164), on the other hand, is that the problem of the equality of the sexes must be taken in its temporality, from which the author deduces two imperatives and a methodological conclusion: the two imperatives are “never forget that the history of women’s emancipation is a long history” and “never reduce it to the repetition of the same protest”; the methodological conclusion is that, in observing these two imperatives, it is necessary to “follow [...] the term ‘equality’”, which means precisely the requirement and adoption of a “common measure between the sexes”. Accordingly, this idea of common measure points precisely to the concept of equality.

Having accepted Henneau’s hypothesis and adopted the path suggested by Fraisse, we chose to select some key figures in this dispute, all from France and either for their historical importance as a whole or the great availability of bibliography. Besides these reasons, there is also the impossibility of, in a single article, addressing manifestations of this question in other countries such as England, Italy, Germany, Holland, and Spain..., as we have in a volume of the collection *École du Genre*, organized by Dubois-Nayt, Henneau and Kulesa (2015)⁴.

Regarding the selected key figures, the focus is on: a) the rights claimed for women; b) the idea/concept/principle of equality as the foundation of the universality of such rights; c) the arguments invoked in defense of an education/instruction for women equal to that offered to men and; d) the possible relationship of all this with what, in the 20th century, would come to be called social rights and among them, the right to education.

Note however, that following the term “equality” over time has its implications, for the concept and principle of equality has always been a difficult element to accommodate within liberal doctrine and practice, to the point that liberal authors who emphasize equality have been accused of socialism by liberals of different shades, such as neoliberals.

What has been said about equality is extremely important for the development of the proposed theme. This is because the affirmation of the equality principle has historically been closely associated with the defense of women’s rights.

Finally, it should be clarified that this is not properly a historiographical study, but a sociological one that makes use of history.

It begins with the proto-feminist Christine de Pizan, at the end of the 14th century and the first decades of the 15th century, until the Marquis de Condorcet and Olympe de Gouges at the end of the 18th century, during the French Revolution.

Christine de Pizan, Venice 1363-1430 or 1431, Poissy/ France

Benoîte Groult (2010, p. 18-19) said that it was only in the Middle Ages that an awareness of the feminine condition emerged and it was

possible to have the formulation of a initial body of doctrine of what, much later, would take the name of *feminism*⁵. Still according to the author, it was women who “sketched the first traces, not of an individual revolt, which had already existed in the past, but of a revolution that would do justice to their entire sex”. Christine de Pizan was the “first woman to live by her pen” and to “give feminism its modern expression”.

From what A. Paupert (2013, p. 24-25) explained, the first awareness of the female condition of which Groult referred to would have been preceded, in the late Middle Ages, by an “upsurge of antifeminist themes in satirical works or short poems, “works sometimes rather “antimatrimonial than antifeminist.” Still according Paupert (2013, p. 36), Christine de Pizan intervened at a very determined moment in history: at the turn of the 14th to the 15th century. The multiplication of plays, starting in the 14th century, for and against marriage, for and against women, and even more, the publication of Jean Le Fèvre’s set of texts and the translation from Latin into French of the *Lamentationes of Ma-teolus* already constituted “a way of debate.”

However, according to the author, it was with Christine’s entry on the scene that the situation changed,

By engaging in the defense of women and taking upon herself the task of refuting one by one the anti-feminist arguments of her opponents, and bringing this debate before the court (Queen Elizabeth), and a wider public: the courtly and lay society and even more, all women, to whom The City and the three virtues were explicitly addressed, she [Christine] gave a decisive impetus to what was to become the woman question. Moreover, she was a woman who, for the first time, took the floor in this debate, something that will not be repeated until much later (Paupert, 2013, p. 36-37).

The “proto-feminist” we are speaking of was born in Venice in 1363 or 1364, bearing the name Cristina da Pisano, and died as Christine de Pizan (also Pisan), in Poissy, France, in 1430 or 1431. When she was only three years old, her father, a physician, professor of astrology at the University of Bologna, and advisor to the Republic of Venice, was appointed astrologer, alchemist, and physician to King Charles V of France, known as the “wise king” and holder of one of the main libraries of the Christian world. It was thanks to the access to this library, located in the royal palace (Louvre), that Christine was able to satisfy her intellectual interests, for which she had the support and encouragement of her father, and later also of the royal notary, Étienne du Castel, whom she had married.

After the death of King Charles V in 1380, Christine, at the age of 24-25, also lost her husband, who left her with many debts, and later her father. By excluding the alternatives of both remarrying or joining a convent, she sought her own survival through her pen, as well as that of her three children, her mother and a destitute niece, and became known as the first woman to live by her pen, i.e., as a professional writer.

Note that she was the first woman to use the pen as a profession, not the first woman to make use of the pen.

As a court poet, she wrote over three hundred ballads. Paupert (2013, p. 29) distinguished four works by the author that defended women as her main object: *Épître au Dieu d'Amours* (Epistle to the God of love), from 1399; *Épîtres du Debat sur le Roman de la Rose* (Epistles of the debate on the *Romance of the rose*), from the beginning of the 1400s; The book of the city of ladies, from 1404-1405; and *Livre des Trois Vertues* (The book of the three virtues), from 1405.

Although it is usually dated to the early 15th century, it is understood that Christine's proto-feminism was already present in the last year of the 14th century. Indeed, in the above-mentioned Epistle to the God of love, of 1399, the poet Christine unleashed the so-called Epistles of the debate on the *Romance of the rose*, in which she severely criticized the aforementioned romance, composed of two parts: the first, by Guillaume de Lloris, circa 1230, on "the whole [chivalric] art of love"; the second, much more extensive, by Jean de Meun, written around 1275, grossly misogynistic, as in the following passages:

A rich man who imagines himself loved has more horns than a deer. [...] Leave the weeping to women and children, for they are weak and fickle creatures. [...] But once you have conquered the prize [the *Rose*], it will take great skill to keep it, if you want to enjoy it for a long time, since keeping and protecting the things you have conquered is no less a virtue than that represented by the act of conquering. [...] What is certain is that now there is not a single Lucretia, not even a single Penelope in Greece, and, if we were to look hard enough, not a single good woman on earth. [...] It is because of you that I am covered with shame; it is because of you, for you and for your lewdness that I am now a member of the brotherhood of St. Arnold, the patron of cuckold men, a brotherhood which, as far as I know, no man who has a wife is safe from [...]. [...] Women don't care in the least about things like honor or shame whenever an idea is put into their heads, since you can't doubt the fact that women don't know anything. [...] Women prove particularly inconvenient and dull in their speeches (Meun apud Lloris; Meun, 2001, p. 81; 106; 136; 142; 142; 149; 153; 298).

In the aforementioned *Épître*⁶, a poem of some 830 verses, Christine addressed Cupid, god of love, and all his loyal servants, with the words "HEALTH, LOVE, FAMILIARITY". She justified her epistle by saying that at Court, laments and complaints from all the ladies and gentlemen had reached her, humbly asking for her help. She went on to say that these complaints referred to great extortions, criticisms, slanders, betrayals, outrages, falsehoods, and many other reproaches which women daily receive from disloyal [men/gentlemen], who reproach, slander, and disappoint them (Pizan, 1399, verses 1-22).

And she denounced, “In all localities they [the women] complained of France that in the past was their shield and defense, which defended them against all from injustice, as is right and as our noble country should do, where kindness used to reign” (Pizan, 1399, v. 23-27). And she exclaims, “God, what talkers! God, what assemblies where the honor of ladies are stolen!” (Pizan, 1399, v. 163-164). She criticized clerics “who make verses, both in the afternoon and in the morning, and base themselves on who knows what books that tell more lies than some drunkards” (Pizan, 1399, v. 276-280). For the poet, Ovid’s treatise *Art of loving* is misnamed, being rather the “book of the art of deceiving [women]” (Pizan, 1399, v. 376-377).

Next, Christine referred to the “long process”, the “difficult thing”, involving “clear and obscure sciences” and “great adventures” posed by Jean de Meun in the *Romance of the rose*, to rob the castle – to seize the *Rose*; in fact, “to deceive, without further ado, a maiden” (Pizan, 1399, v. 389-396). And she asks, “Is there need of a great assault to [take] a defenseless place? How can one make a great assault from so close? [...] Then, for what art, great cleverness, and effort does one need to deceive a woman, noble or peasant?” (Pizan, 1399, v. 397-398; 403-404).

It would be anachronistic to seek in Christine de Pizan a concept of equality as it would be constructed mainly from the 17th century on. But already in the aforementioned Epistle of 1399, there are terms and expressions that go in this direction, such as *Dieu la forma à sa digne semblance* (God has formed her to his worthy likeness); *C’est son droit par qui a lui est semblable* (It is her right because he is similar to her); *Car nul bon fruit de mal arbre ne vient* (Because no good fruit comes from a bad tree); *Car aux mères bien ressemblent les fieulz* (Because to mothers well resemble their children) (Pizan, 1399, v. 595; 735; 755; 758).

And the author concludes saying that “all reasonable men should esteem, treat with affection, love women, [...] from whom every man descends. This is about his mother, his sister, his friend” (Pizan, 1399, v. 722; 723; 733).

Bearing in mind the widespread prejudices then in vogue against women, at least five important points should be highlighted: first, Christine’s personal interest in study and writing (authorship); second, the support she received from her father, her husband, and members of the court itself; third, her privileged access to the royal library; fourth, her speaking as a woman and as a representative of the female universe; and fifth, to have made from education a cause of all women.

Regarding the place of education in the woman question, Viennot (2012, p. 14) made an important synthesis for the interests of this article:

Finally, from the 17th century on, the dispute would focus on the issue of education and women’s access to knowledge, due to the idea, strongly launched by Christine de Pizan in 1404 and later taken up by all feminists, according to which, ‘If there existed the custom to send girls to school and teach them methodically the sciences, as is

done with boys, they would learn and understand the difficulties of all the arts and all the sciences as well as they do⁷.

It was, therefore, Christine de Pizan who launched the idea of fighting for women's education, which should be equal to the one offered to men, an idea that would gain strength mainly after the 17th century.

The interest in Christine de Pizan in Brazil has been shown recently, for example, in a PhD dissertation (Calado, 2006) and a master's thesis (Souza, 2013), both studies on the work *The City of the Ladies*.

It should be noted, however, that Christine de Pizan was neither the first woman, nor the only one in her time, to make use of writing. She was, as far as is known, the first to make a living from writing, as already pointed out. What bothered misogynists was not just the fact that a woman entered the public space through writing. She was simply barred from entering public spaces, no matter what was the way – writing, work, speaking, music, theater... Indeed, Christine de Pizan's contemporary, the English bourgeois Margery Kempe (1273-1438), for example, even without a command of reading and writing, was severely harassed because she kept in her singular memory the readings she was given of the Bible and other works, such as those of St. Augustine, and dared to act in public as a contesting *cleric*. As she herself recounts in a book dictated to a copyist, this that earned her clergymen to consider her possessed by the devil for speaking of the gospel (Pain, 2015, p. 211-220).

For Swift (2013 p. 61), if the overtures in the *Woman Question* do not reach an end to the debate ("the meaning of the *Rose* will never be 'fully closed'"), they "at least place the question of women at the beating heart of late medieval poetics."

Dispute over the superiority of women or men

Judging by the works consulted from the collection *École du genre*, the woman question in the post-Christine period up to the mid-17th was marked mainly by the dispute over the superiority of women or men.

In this regard, Fraisse (2012, p.163-4) points out that the issue in the period heralded the existence of a polemic in which arguments invoking moral qualities and the hierarchy of values were affronted and disputed over the excellence of woman⁸ or man, i. e., over which of the two sexes was the better. Such dispute became an obstacle to equality, as it suggested hierarchy and classification, necessarily implying inequality.

The author also identifies in this issue a utopian element in relation to the idea of equality: "But, at the same time, it [the issue] does not take its full meaning until the emergence of utopia the common measure between the sexes, which is called equality" (Fraisse, 2012, p. 164). It was a common measure of which Pizan spoke, as was just seen.

Indeed, the idea of equality appears explicitly in the excerpts taken from the 1556 edition of Louise Labé's works (circa 1520-1566), which accompany B. Alonso's (2013, pp. 121-131) article on this Renaissance author, but "equality" in the form of "a paradoxical utopia at the heart of the woman question."

Alonso saw in Labé's work, *The debate of folly and love*, an issue of precedence, of inequality between a man and a woman that serves as a pretext for discussion. But the author also says that, in this text, Labé "made men and women equal and complementary, in order to reconcile what people are pleased to oppose" and sees in it "a feminist text, emancipating women, socially and mentally, by affirming the complexity and paradoxes of humanity" (Alonso, 2013, p. 130-131).

It seems that Labé does not yet had a concept of equality between the sexes, and much less the affirmation of equality as a universal principle. But in a letter of 1555, addressed to a friend named Clémence, Labé (2013, p. 134) used the terms "to (ultra)pass or equal men" in science and virtue, to which end he called upon "the virtuous ladies to raise their spirits a little above their ratchets and spindles." In this regard, Viennot (2013, p. 133), referring to Labé, spoke of a "common will to support the emergence of women of letters at a time when their access to the literary scene, thanks to all the new press, aroused much irritation. In any case, it took until the 17th century to have a clear and universal concept of gender equality, which would only come with Marie de Gournay and Poulain de la Barre.

Marie de Gournay, France, 1565-1645

About two centuries since Christine de Pizan and 70 years after the work cited by Labé, Marie de Gournay published in Paris in 1622 a little treatise entitled *L'égalité des Hommes et des Femmes* (The equality of men and women) – perhaps the first publication to already use the term "equality" in the title to define the relationship between the sexes. The author is known as *Fille d'alliance* (adopted daughter) of the philosopher Montaigne, who is known mainly for his *Essays*.

The frequent use of the term *lumière* (light), in addition to expressions such as "reaching noon since dawn," "light knows no West," suggests the presence, in *L'égalité*, of flashes of a nascent Enlightenment, which, half a century later, would manifest itself with greater clarity and vigor in Poulain de la Barre.

Also in *L'égalité*, the author said that, unlike some advocates of the cause of women, who speak of their superiority as opposed to the male superiority held by others, she is content to equate women with men and finds it strange that some, not satisfied with preferring the male sex, still want to imprison women irrefragably to spindles. She adds with irony that there are men that "braver than Hercules, who only defied 12 monsters in 12 combats, defeat with a single word half the world [the female half]. And she challenged: "Who, however, will believe that those who want to elevate and fortify themselves with the weakness of

others can elevate or fortify themselves with their own strength?" As for instruction, she said that if women less often than men reach the levels of excellence, it is a wonder that the lack of good instruction and even the occurrence of bad instruction do not totally prevent them from getting there. (Gournay, 1978a, pp. 61-63). And, minimizing the difference between the sexes when it comes to the human animal, the author argued, "nothing looks more like a male cat in the window than a female cat" (Gournay, 1978a, p. 70).

Referring to the author's second treatise: *Le grief des dammes* (The complaint of the ladies), from 1726, Schiff (1978, p. 89, note 1) stated that Gournay, from the very first line, gives "free flow to her complaints against men." Indeed, the opening words of the text confirm: "Happy are you, reader, if you are not of the sex to which all goods are forbidden [...]. Happy are you once again, you who can be wise without crime, your quality of man granting you everything that is forbidden to women" (Gournay, 1978b, p. 89).

Regarding Gournay's two short treatises mentioned above, Schiff (1978, p. 47) argues that they should be given a separate place in Gournay's work, because a singular originality can be seen in them: first, for having "defended, at all costs, woman and women against the unjust disdain of men"; second, for having treated with persuasive warmth "a subject which was only fit for joking and which in its time had already given rise to countless satires. Referring to the quarrels of the time about women, Schiff (1978, p. 48) said that "there were grudges and sympathies, nothing more"; but that Gournay had a totally different way of proceeding, and her thesis can be summarized as follows: "man and woman are equivalent creatures," in which she identifies in the author "a real independence of judgment and a great courage," especially if one considers that "Marie did not have, to defend herself, even the beauty that makes men sometimes forgive women the fact that they love what they do not love". In fact, not even Gournay's cats – Donzelle and Minette - were safe from the sneers of the misogynists on duty (Schiff, 1978, p. 37, 45 e 48).

However, underlining the importance of Marie de Gournay's contribution to the struggle for women's rights based on equality, it should be noted that the idea of equality between the sexes did not emerge with the work *The equality* in 1622. Indeed, as a utopia, it had already been present at least in Chistine de Pizan and Louise Labé, as was previously shown.

In the assessment of Fraisse (2012, p. 164, my emphasis), the writings of Marie de Gournay could indicate "the beginning of a transition: invoking, affirming the balance, pronouncing the term 'equality', and making it even the title of her book". But he adds, "From the idea of equality, which she [Marie] promotes to the properly recognized and effective *concept* [of equality], one follows the path that, throughout the Great Century [17th], leads to Poulain de la Barre."⁹

The intervening period of Gournay and Poulain knew Descartes and his dualism, or dualistic method, which would become “subversive to thinking about the sexes” (Fraisie, 2012, p. 164). Poulain himself (2011, p. 277) was categorical about this: “There is none [method] that has spoken with greater propriety about prejudices, nor that has fought them with greater vigor”.

François Poulain de la Barre, France, 1647 – 1723 [1725?] Geneva

About half a century after the text *L'égalité* of Marie de Gournay, the work *De l'égalité des deux sexes* (On the equality of the two sexes) by the French Cartesian philosopher-theologian François Poulain de la Barre was published in 1673, a name that, like most feminists, ended up being relegated to oblivion. He only returned to memory in the middle of the 20th century, thanks in large part to the following quote by feminist Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, from 1949: “Everything that men have written about women must be suspect, because they are at once judge and party”, wrote, in the 17th century, Poulain de la Barre, a little-known feminist” (Beauvoir, 1980, v. 1, p. 15-16).

The first paragraph of the preface of *De l'égalité* surprises by the way the author announces his plan and intention:

There is nothing more delicate than talking about women. When a man speaks on their behalf, people soon imagine that it is either for gallantry or love: and it is very probable that, for the most part, in judging this speech by its Title, they will soon believe it to be the effect of the one or the other [of gallantry or love] and will be glad to know for real the motive and intention [of the author] (Poulain De La Barre, 2011, p. 53).

From a Cartesian perspective, Poulain states that “we are full of prejudices” and that “we must rid ourselves of them in order to obtain clear and distinct knowledge.” He then announces the prejudice he will be dealing with: “Of all prejudices, none has been found more suited to this goal than the one commonly held about the inequality of the two sexes” (Poulain de La Barre, 2011, p. 54). Continuing, Poulain says that “Everyone, both those who have studied and those who have not, and even women agree in saying that they have no part in the sciences and jobs, because they are not capable.” and that in order to change this understanding, “it is necessary to make those without study see” “how women have been subjugated and excluded from the sciences and jobs,” and “to show that the proofs of the Sages are all vain” and that, ordinarily, the defects of which women are accused “are imaginary or of little importance” and “that they come only from the education which is given them, producing in them considerable disadvantages” (Poulain de La Barre, 2011, p. 54-55).

In the first part of *On the equality*, the author seeks to show that “vulgar opinion is a prejudice and that, by comparing disinterestedly what

can be observed in the conduct of men and women, one is obliged to recognize between the two sexes a complete equality". In the second part, he "makes one see why the testimonies that can be brought against the feeling of equality of the two Sexes, taken from Poets, Orators, Historians, Jurisconsults, and Philosophers [in fact, also from doctors] are all vain and useless" (Poulain de La Barre, 2011, p. 59 and 89, emphasis added). Even though the author does not further develop the theme of education specifically as a right, there is an interesting passage in *De l'égalité*, in which he speaks of the right to education as a right to truth and to knowledge (Poulain de La Barre, 2011, p. 111).

The theme of women's education/instruction had practical-pedagogical development in the dialogues held in *On the education of ladies*, from 1674, in which Poulain deals with the means of realizing his proposal, namely: "that women be instructed with the same care with which men are instructed" and, as Sophie (female stuntperson, disciple turned master) is told by Stasimaque (in turn, Poulain's male stuntperson), "that he who has exalted women, also perform their instruction, so that they may have towards him the obligation of having done, for their good and glory, all that a skillful man is capable of doing" (Poulain de La Barre, 2011, pp. 173 e 178-179).

In the preface of *De l'égalité*, Poulain imagined that his book would provoke fierce reaction from many men and those whose interests and maxims were thwarted would not fail to cry out against it. In reality, this did not happen, which led the author to write a third book, entitled *De l'excellence des hommes* (On the excellence of men), published in 1675, in which he plays the role of a contradictor of himself (Poulain de La Barre, 2011, p. 291-393).

The importance of Poulain de la Barre grows, nowadays, due to the weight that the principle of equality has in his work. Indeed, unlike the classic rights of freedom and formal equality, the fundamental social rights, now nationally and internationally recognized, among which that of education, "were born embraced by the principle of equality", as mentioned before (Bonavides, 2017, p. 578).

In this same vein, it is necessary to highlight the work François Poulain de la Barre and the invention of modern equality, in which the Dutchman Siep Stuurman (2004, p. 1) sees in the former Sorbonne theology student (Poulain) one of the most remarkable absences in the historiography of the early Enlightenment; precisely the one who, in the early 1670s, "formulated a Cartesian, feminist, and radically egalitarian social philosophy" and who "published three treatises on the equality between women and men that, in all probability, are the most radically egalitarian texts published in Europe before the French Revolution." In this work, the author goes further, supporting the following thesis:

Poulain's historical significance lies in the fact that he formulated a systematic egalitarian philosophy in which, for the first time, the idea of the natural equality of all human beings possessing reason is applied to all kinds of

social relations. Poulain is perhaps the only thinker of the 17th century who formulated a truly universal concept of equality (Stuurman, 2004, p. 296, emphasis added).

Stuurman (2004, p. 297) points out that this Cartesian egalitarian social philosophy of Poulain is generally recognized as a landmark in the history of feminism and then goes on to say that he intended to show in his book that this philosophy is also a landmark in another context – that of the creation or invention of the Enlightenment, dimensions “treated for the first time together in a systematic argument”. Still according to the author, this becomes clear when one looks beyond feminism and Cartesianism, considering also other contexts such as “authority and natural law, theories of education, anthropology, history, and finally religion and theology”, which leads the author to say that Poulain, as a product of his time, “explored the limits of the thinkable in late 17th-century Europe.”

But Marie de Gournay and Poulain de la Barre were not the only ones to fight for the equality of the sexes. In fact, referring to the long wrangling of women, D. Haase-Dubosc (2015) says that in the period of the Republic of Letters, this wrangling eventually became a war:

when an author manifests her literary and feminine presence on the great discursive scene of the Question, whether it be Marie de Gournay or the precious Germaine Necker or George Sande¹⁰, to name no more than those best known to the French, the literary criticism that ostensibly addresses their works leaves circumscribed field of literature to pour itself out on the person, on her own body, [which comes to be] treated as ugly, ill-washed, old lurid horror, designated under traits of various animals [...]. It is then that the arguments that demonstrate the inferiority of women and prove the impossibility of the equality of the sexes overflow their literary frame and begin to fuel not only a *Question*, but a *War* from which not even the best-armed female author goes out unscathed (Haase-Dubosc, 2015, p. 225, emphasis of the author).

Two centuries after Poulain de la Barre, the 19th century philosopher of feminism, John Stuart Mill, would be adamant that “the legal subordination of one sex to the other” should be replaced “by a principle of perfect equality, without any power or privilege to one side or the other” (Mill, 2006, p. 15).

From a century of low profile feminism to the French Revolution

According to Groult (2010, p. 45), Poulain de la Barre was followed by a century of “low profile feminism”¹¹, in which authors such as Molière, Boileau, La Rochefoucauld, Buffon, Fénelon, Saint-Evremond, Racine, La Bruyère, “resume, to talk about women, the paternalistic or disdainful tone of traditional misogynists and resort to a fierce irony

against any hint of independence and culture". In relation to what regards this article, it is worth recalling one of the lessons contained in *The school for wives*¹² of 1662, on the duties of married women:

Seventh lesson

As much as it annoys you
pen, ink, and paper
you must get them out of your head.
Ignorance is a shield.
In a truly honorable home
the husband writes everything down (Molière¹³, 1997, p. 45)

In the above list, Groult (2010, p. 51) failed to include Rousseau, to further define him as the "brilliant leader of 18th century antifeminism, which will influence most of the revolutionaries, the most active in any case, Robespierre at the head".

After this century of "low profile feminism", there was the time of the French Revolution (1789). From Christine de Pisan until then, not much progress had been made regarding the right to education, thinking about it in terms of effective conquest, or to use Bobbio's (2004, p. 15) expression, as a "right that one has". It is enough to remember that education does not appear in the 1789 Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, having been mentioned, but never as a right, in only three of the 48 Draft Declarations assembled in a dossier by Rials (1988, p. 475-749) in his work *La déclaration des droits de l'homme et du citoyen*. The French Constitution of 1791 also contains no statement of a right to education. It only states that

a public institution common to all citizens will be created and organized, free as regards the parts of education indispensable to all men, and whose establishments will be distributed gradually, taking into account the division of the kingdom (France, 1791).

However, the right to education had advanced, yes, if, resorting once again to Bobbio (2004, op. 15), education is thought of in terms of "a right one would like to have. The revolutionary period we examined was of great importance in this struggle for education: first, because of the prominent place that the theme of public education had in the revolutionary period; second, because of the expression and international repercussion that the works of three feminists in Paris and London had in defense of public education during the Revolution, as follows

France, in the years of the Revolution: Marquis de Condorcet, France, 1743-1794

Jean-Antoine-Nicolas de Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet, is considered the theorist of the republican school. Regarding the topic addressed in this article, the author's first work to be considered is *On the admission of women to the right of citizenship*, originally published in

1781 and reprinted in 1789. It is interesting that, almost a decade before the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, Condorcet had claimed for women the right to citizenship, a right that the Declaration, as well as the French Constitutions of the early 1790s, would not contemplate. Condorcet (1991, p. 45) begins the text by saying that “Habit may acquaint people with the violation of natural rights” and exemplifies by questioning, “have they not all violated the principle of the equality of rights, by quietly depriving half the human race of that of concurring in the formation of laws, by excluding women from the right of citizenship?” To the objection that women did not properly have a sense of justice and that they obeyed feeling rather than conscience, the author replies by saying that even if true, this observation would prove nothing, because “it is not nature, it is education, it is social existence that causes this difference; neither one, nor the other have accustomed women to what is fair, but to what is honest” (Condorcet, 1991, p. 48). Note the emphasis placed by the author on education. Note also that, in the mentioned article, the author refers not to a specific political right, such as voting, but to the set of human rights, which he advocates for women as well: “Now, the rights of men result from the fact that they are sentient beings, susceptible of acquiring moral ideas and of reasoning about these ideas. Therefore, as women have these same qualities, they necessarily should have equal rights” (Condorcet, 1991, p. 45-46).

In his *Réflexions sur l’esclavage des Nègres* (Reflections on the Slavery of Negroes), a text also published in 1781 and reprinted on the eve of the Revolution, Condorcet also advocates the liberation of slaves. The author begins by saying: “Although I am not of the same color as you, I have always considered you as my brothers. Nature has formed you to have the same spirit, the same reason, the same virtues as the whites” (Condorcet, 1781, p. 5) He goes on to say that in his text he would not employ eloquence, but reason; that he would speak “not of the interests of commerce, but of the laws of justice”; and that he was aware that their tyrants would reproach him for only saying common things and for having nothing but chimerical ideas. Incidentally, the author agreed with that, for he said, “indeed, nothing is more common than the maxims of humanity and justice” and “nothing is more chimerical than to propose to men to conform their conduct [to these maxims]” (Condorcet, 1781, p. 5-6)

Before addressing Condorcet’s conception of education as a right, it is worth recalling Bobbio’s words:

All recent declarations of human rights include, in addition to the traditional individual rights, which consist of freedoms, also so-called social rights, which consist of powers. The former require from others (including public bodies) purely negative obligations, implying abstention from certain behaviors; the latter can only be realized if a certain number of positive obligations are imposed on others (including public bodies) (Bobbio, 2004, p. 21).

And further on the author states: “The figure of the right has as its correlate the figure of the obligation” (Bobbio, 2004, p. 74)

What is shown now is that all those elements that would be highlighted by Bobbio two centuries later are found in Condorcet: the notion of social rights, of powers (rights), having as a correlate positive obligations on the part of public agencies. In 1791, the author published five articles, later collected in the work *Five Memoirs on Public Instruction*, in which he defends public instruction as “a means to make real the equality of rights”, as “society’s duty”, as “a means to perfect the human species”..., instruction which, according to him, should be “the same for women and men” (Condorcet, 2008, p. 17; 25; 57).

At the beginning of the “First Memoir”, in which he addressed the nature and object of public education, the author is explicit and emphatic in affirming public education as a *duty of society and a right for all*: “Society owes the people a public education” and this because it is the “means of making real the equality of rights” (Condorcet, 2008, p. 17, my emphasis). In turn, not offering public education to the people places the state in the condition of a *debtor*.

Regarding women, the author is explicit about the equal rights to education: “It is necessary that women share the common instruction given to men”. In this regard, Badinter (1991, p. 18) notes that Condorcet skillfully tries to convince his readers “using altruistic arguments, which subordinate female instruction to the good of the child, the husband, and the family”, and that “only lastly does he evoke the right of women to public instruction”. But, as we have in the first of the *Five memoirs*, the author maintains that public instruction “is a duty of society to the citizens”; that it “must be the same for women and men”; that “women have the same rights as men”; that they therefore have “the right to obtain the same facilities for acquiring the lights, which can give them the means of actually exercising such rights, with an equal independence and to an equal extent”, and therefore instruction “must be given in common” (Condorcet, 2008, p. 17; 57; 60-61, my emphasis).

Of course, repeating Bobbio (2004, p. 15), *it is not about a right that one has, but only about a right that one would like to have* - that is wanted to see recognized.

In conclusion, it can be said that Condorcet, the theoretician of the republican school, was also the highest theoretical expression in defense of women’s rights, especially the right to education, during the French Revolution and that he associated the liberation of enslaved black populations with the liberation of women.

In the Report and draft decree on the general organization of public instruction, which were presented to the National Assembly on behalf of the Committee of Public Instruction on April 20 and 21, 1792, Condorcet, in defining the first purpose of national instruction, associates the principle of equality with that of universality:

We think that on the level of the general organization [of public instruction] our first care should be to make, on

the one hand, education as equal as it is universal; and, on the other hand, as complete as circumstances may permit; [...] Thus, instruction must be universal, or rather, it must extend to all citizens (Condorcet, 2010, 23-24).

And concluding this part, it should be noted that the author, when using the term equality, understands it not as formal equality, but as real equality (Condorcet, 1993, p. 17 and 185).

Olympe de Gouges, France, 1748-1793

Olympe de Gouges, pseudonym of Marie Gouze, was born in 1748 in Montauban, in southwestern France. She considered herself the illegitimate daughter of a Montauban lord, without ever having been recognized as such, which led her to become a passionate defender of the rights of illegitimate children. She married very young, had a son in 1765, and was subsequently widowed. In 1770 she moved to Paris. She became known as a playwright, political activist, women's rights advocate, and abolitionist.

On April 17, 2014, the Prefecture of Montauban paid tribute to her during a ceremony to award diplomas to those appointed and promoted in the Order of Academic Palms, emphasizing at the time that Olympe fought many fights until 1793, the year she was guillotined: "Fights, of course, in favor of women's rights, but also in favor of blacks. It is precisely with this theme that she enters literature. [...] For the first time in theater she chooses as main characters black slaves [...]" (André-Acquier, 2014, p. 1) And note what Perrot (2014, p. 34) says about Olympe's involvement with the theater: "It was even more difficult to become a woman of theater than a woman of letters", especially if one considers that the author "put on stage a society of slave planters, inhuman and unjust".

As for writing, Perrot (2014, p. 17) noted that Olympe "deplored not mastering the art of the essay"; that "writing was for her mainly instrumental, a protesting, vehement cry"; that she had "the talent of the manifesto. This talent was fully expressed and consecrated her in 1791, in the *Déclaration des droits de la femme e de la citoyenne* (Declaration of the rights of the woman and the citizen), in which she confronted the dominant machismo among the French revolutionaries. Also according to Perrot (2014, p. 17), it was in this *Déclaration* that perpetuated her, that Olympe "reached the heights of percussive concision", as "To become famous for a single text is a great art".

Indeed, while the Declaration of 1789 was totally silent on asserting any human right for women (Rials, 1988), Olympe de Gouges' Declaration of 1791 (1993, art. I and foreword) would be explicit and forceful, beginning by stating that "I. Woman is born free and remains equal to man in rights" and that therefore "II. Social distinctions can only be based on the common good," and then, at the end, it sentences: "[...] and since we are now dealing with national education, let us see if our

wise Legislators will think judiciously about the education of women” (Gouges, 1993, Articles I and II and foreword).

Similarly, in Olympe’s *Déclaration* women’s rights also extend to the field of politics and the world of work:

VI. The law must be the expression of the general will; all Citizens must contribute personally, or through their representatives, to its formation; it must be the same for all: all Citizens, being equal in their eyes, must be equally admissible to all dignities, places and public employments, according to their capacities, and without other distinctions than their virtues and their talents (Gouges, 1993, art. VI).

But the struggle for universal suffrage did not exist yet and would only become a claim after 1840, placing itself then “at the heart of political agitation” (Perrot, 2014, p. 86). In articles VII and IX of her *Declaration*, referring to criminal legislation, Gouges (1993) says that every woman, without exception, is subject to the law, and may be accused, arrested and detained in cases determined by it, and that if found guilty, the law will be exercised on her with all rigors.

But there is a part of an article of the Olympe *Declaration*, which the misogynists of the Convention have turned against her. Indeed, of the two rights claimed for women in Article X (“a woman has the right to go up to the scaffold; then she must also have the right to go up to the tribune”), only the first was recognized and promptly applied to her in 1793, with recourse even to Guillotin’s recent invention – the guillotine. Perhaps Olympe could not foresee that, two centuries later, it would be written that “women had the right to go up to the guillotine, but not to the tribune” (Badinter, 1991, p. 41).

In fact, if on the one hand, as Badinter (1991) observes, the French Revolution sensibly improved the legal status of women between 1789 and the end of 1793, as in the Constitution of 1791, which established civil marriage, recognizing women as subjects of private law, on the other hand, regarding political participation, at the end of 1793 the Convention prohibited them not only from the tribune, but also from women’s clubs and popular societies.

Perhaps the conventioners found motivation for such bans in the “boldness” of Lysistrata and Chorus (old men) and in the fear and revolt of Chorus (old women), characters in the play *Lysistrata*, by Aristophanes, in ancient Greece in 411 B.C., more than two millennia before the French Revolution:

Lysistrata – And tell them all to come, for equal treatment. Tell them that the law now is also female. If this is not better, at least it will be much cheaper. [...]

Chorus (old men) – Because, look at it carefully. It’s a crime and a disgrace to let women harangue citizens, teaching them that this is patriotic, that is illegal, this is civic, that is immoral. They even dare to preach union with the Spar-

tans [...]. But as for me: I will not submit myself! To start the reaction, I will put myself right now in the square, as a statue at the monument of Hecate. [...] And when this stupid woman passes by I will piss on her.

Chorus (old women) - That may be. But I wouldn't advise you to do it, because afterwards not even your own mother will recognize you.

[...]

Chorus (old women) - I will not fear male threats [...]. You can make decrees and more decrees condemning women, you abominable creatures, but we will not give in [...] (Aristophanes, 2003, p. 66-69).

Mary Wollstonecraft, England, 1759-1797

Even though it has been declared that this work focuses on the woman question and the right to education in France in the period from 1399 to the French Revolution, it has been decided to deal, although very briefly, with the English feminist Mary Wollstonecraft for several reasons: first, the relationship of the English author to the woman question in France; second, the fact that her work *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, was published in 1792 “in response to the French Constitution of 1791, which did not include women in the category of citizens” (Moraes, 2016, p. 7); third, its relationship with the arrival in Brazil of women's struggle for rights, which occurred in 1832, with the publication of *Direitos das mulheres e injustiça dos homens*, which the Brazilian author Nísia Floresta Brasileira Augusta herself defined as “Free translation of the original *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, by Mary Wollstonecraft” (Floresta, 1989, p. 1).

In 1792, across the English Channel, the English woman Mary Wollstonecraft published the book *Vindication of the rights of women*, recently translated and published in Brazil under the title *Reivindicação dos direitos da mulher* (2016). The author dedicated this work to Talleyrand-Perigord, former bishop of Autun and active politician during the French Revolution. Incidentally, note that the author was in Paris at the time of the storming of the Bastille in 1789, having possibly met with Olympe de Gouges and the Marquis de Condorcet.

The author criticized Talleyrand-Perigord for believing that he had dealt with the topic of women's rights in too superficial a manner and asks him to deign to evaluate what she was proposing regarding women's rights and public instruction (Wollstonecraft, 2016). She also states that her main argument in this “struggle for the rights of woman” is based on this simple principle: “if the woman is not prepared by education to become the companion of the man, she will halt the progress of knowledge and virtue, for truth must be common to all or it will be ineffective as regards its influence on general conduct”; and in a critique of the French Constitution of 1791, she concluded addressing Talleyrand-Perigord: “when your Constitution is revised, it may be that the rights of Women will be respected” (Wollstonecraft, 2016, p. 18 e 21).

In the chapter dedicated to national education, the author advocates not only a school education for women equal to that of men, but also coeducation: “if both sexes are to improve themselves, it is necessary, not only in the privacy of families, but also in public schools, that they should be educated together” (Wollstonecraft, 2016, p. 214).

In the Introduction to the Penguin English Library edition, Kramnick (1983, p. 38, 52 and 53) says that *Vindication* was built “on the assumption of the equality of the sexes”, that it is “a refutation of Rousseau’s theories about women”, and that Rousseau’s Sophie is the “antithesis of Wollstonecraft’s rational woman”. One might add that, in opposition to Rousseau’s thesis of an education of domination for Emilio and one of subordination for Sophie, the author of *Vindication* advocates as a right an equal education for men and women. One could also say that Rousseau’s Sophie is the antipode of Poulain de la Barre’s Sophie mentioned earlier.

It should also be noted that, like the Marquis de Condorcet and Olympe de Gouges in Paris, Mary Wollstonecraft in London associates the cause of freeing slaves with the cause of women’s rights. In this regard, it is worth reproducing here what the author says in the preface to the Brazilian translation of Wollstonecraft’s work:

The Enlightenment feminism of Mary Wollstonecraft and Olympe de Gouges shares the same belief in the importance of education and the universality of rights, echoing Condorcet. It is a feminism that opposes the enslavement of Africans and indigenous people and domestic slavery. Both lived through historical times when women were excluded from formal education, universities, and the possibilities of a higher level career. [...] In some points, [Condorcet’s] text is even more radical, than *Vindication*, as it propounds not only the equality of women’s rights to education, but also to the vote and to private property, to public offices, to the recognition of children born out of wedlock, and to inheritance (Moraes, 2016, p. 10).

Even in France, almost a century after the French Revolution, in a letter dated June 8, 1872 to Léon Richer, cofounder with Marguérite Durand, in 1869, of the Association for Women’s Rights, Victor Hugo (1872, p. 1) wrote: “It is painful to say: in the present civilization there is a slave. The law has euphemisms: what I call a slave, it calls a minor; this minor according to the law; and this slave according to reality, is the woman. And further on: “On the issue of education, as on the issue of repression, [...] on the issue of compulsory, free and secular education, on the question of women, on the question of children, it is time for those in power to take notice”. In reality, France would have to wait until the early 1880s to have compulsory, free, and secular schooling for both sexes established. However, as for the right to vote, French women would have to wait until 1945.

Before concluding, it should be noted that none of the three authors – Condorcet, Gouges, and Wollstonecraft – was a legal professional. Therefore, thinking on the right to education in terms of the technical vocabulary of this area of knowledge could not be evaluated. If the struggle for education also for women, and equal to that provided to men, was rarely understood as a struggle for a “right” (right to education), it cannot be forgotten that this struggle was waged in the name of equality and, in the last quarter of the 18th century, in the name of the principle of equality, enshrined both in the Declaration of Independence of the United States in 1776 and in the Declarations of Rights of several individual American states, and in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, in the French Revolution, in 1789.

Conclusion

The authors examined in this work seldom spoke explicitly of the right to education. Social rights were not yet spoken of. However, one important point can be given as established: throughout the period examined, from 1399 to the end of the 18th century, education has occupied a central role in woman questions within the set of rights claimed. Specifically regarding the issue raised at the beginning, the study carried out strongly suggests that this centuries-old woman question and the issues discussed, particularly that of equality, have indeed contributed to the construction of what is today called the *right to education*, but we have to admit with Bobbio (2004) that, until the beginning of the 20th century, it was a *right one would like to have, not yet a right one have*.

In fact, the right of women to education was a process that took centuries to be recognized in the legislation and become concrete in different measures, countries, and regions, for different classes, sexes and races? It has been based on equality from the beginning: first on equality as an idea or utopia (Christine de Pizan, end of the 14th century and first third of the 15th century); then, in the 17th century, on equality as a concept (Marie de Gournay and Poulain de la Barre) and as a principle (Poulain de la Barre). Finally, at the end of the 18th century, on equality as the basis of education as a public policy object (Condorcet, Olympe de Gouges and Mary Wollstonecraft).

Considering the widespread prejudices in vogue against women at the end of the 14th and 15th centuries, one must retain at least five important points regarding the proto-feminist Christine de Pizan: first, Christine’s personal interest in study and writing (authorship); second, the support she received from her father, her husband, and even King Charles V and members of the court; third, the privileged access to the royal library; fourth, speaking as a woman and as a representative of the female universe; fifth, having made education a cause of the entire female sex.

Fraisse (2012) estimates that two centuries after Christine, Marie de Gournay, by promoting the idea of equality to a properly recognized

and effective concept of equality, conducted to the path that, throughout the great century [17th], led to Poulain de La Barre, a feminist as important among the few male feminists in that century as relegated for centuries to oblivion.

Another fundamental point to note is that the woman question in their struggle for rights at the time of the French Revolution was accompanied by a truly universalist dimension. In fact, already in 1781, eight years before the Revolution, Condorcet defended such rights for all human beings. Olympe de Gouges, in turn, defended the extension of such rights to blacks, and Mary Wollstonecraft, to blacks and indigent people.

Finally, it should be noted that the sudden worsening of the health conditions of this article's author since the beginning of 2018 led him to request CNPq to anticipate the end of the research project, which was scheduled for February 2020. This situation prevented the realization of a second work on how the women's struggle for rights came to Brazil and how it was developed here. It should take as starting point the work *Direitos das mulheres e injustiça dos homens* (Rights of women and injustice of men), published in 1832, by the young *Potiguar* (from the state of Rio Grande do Norte) Nísia Floresta Brasileira Augusta (22 years old), in the city of Recife, with a second edition in the city of Porto Alegre the following year¹⁴.

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Notes

- 1 Work developed in the research project supported by the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq), for the period March/2015 to February/2020 and, for the same period, by the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul/Faculty of Education and Graduate Program in Education. In fact, due to the researcher's health problem, the end of the project was anticipated to May 2019.
- 2 The translations from English the following works: Stuurman (2004), Kramnick (1983), Larsen, and United States (1776) are by the author of this article.
- 3 The author translated from French the following works: Pellegrin (2011), as well as those of Alonso (2013), André-Acquier (2014), Bolufer and Cabré (2015), Condorcet (1781), Dor (2015), Fraisse (2012), France (1791), Gouges (1993 and 1786), Gournay (1910a; 1910b), Groult (2010), Haase-Dubosc (2015), Henneau (2015), Hugo (1872), Labé (2013), La Déclaration... (1988), Noack (1993), Paupert (2013), Perrot (2014), Pizan (1399), Poulain de la Barre (2011), Rials (1988), Scriff (1978), Swift (2013), Viennot (2012 and 2013) .
- 4 Similarly, due to the limits imposed on the length of this text, it was necessary to abandon the initial idea of extending the study to the source(s) and the process of the entry of the question in Brazil at the end of the first quarter of the 19th century. To know more about this, consult the work Nísia Floresta, the first feminist of Brazil (Duarte, 2005).
- 5 The term feminism would appear around 1830, from the pen of the utopian socialist Charles Fourier, "inexhaustible inventor of neologisms", but would

- only enter the current language from a Women's Rights Congress held in Paris in 1892, under the presidency of Margu rite Durand (Groult, 2010, p. 18-19).
- 6 The epistle (letter) constituted a literary style.
- 7 Quotation from *The city of the ladies*, from Christine de Pizan (1996, I, p. 27).
- 8 By the end of the 1430s, in opposition to the prevailing misogyny, the Galician nobleman Juan Rodrigues de la C mara, secretary to a cardinal in the service of King John II of Castile, responding to the demand of Mary of Aragon, Queen of Castile (1403-1445), lists no less than 40 reasons for believing in the superiority of women, including the fact that woman was created after all other things and from purified flesh (from Adam's rib). (On C mara and other male and female authors who wrote about the superiority of women, cf. M. Bolufer and M. Cabr , 2015, p. 32-67).
- 9 The Great Century was marked by numerous other important presences, in several European countries, in defense of women's rights. Marie de Gournay, for example, corresponded with Anna Maria van Schurman (1607-1678), a Calvinist, first university student in Europe (University of Utrecht, Netherlands), graduated in law, with command of Latin (learned from her father), Greek, Hebrew and several other languages, correspondent and admirer of Gournay, defender of women's access to higher education, who was noted for her thesis written in Latin – *Dissertatio de ingenii muliebris ad doctrinam et meliores literas aptitudine, translated into several languages*, as for English, in 1659, under the title *The learned maid* (Larsen, 2008).
- 10 Pseudonym of Amantine Lucile Aurore Dupin.
- 11 This century of “low profile feminism” Groult mentions practically coincides with the period known as the Republic of Letters, which started at the end of the 17th century and lasted until the end of the 18th century.
- 12 Translation by Mill r Fernandes.
- 13 “It is not that Moli re was an enemy of women: he strongly attacked the imposed marriages, and claimed for young women the right to sentimental freedom and respect and independence for wives” (Beauvoir, v. 1, 1980, p. 139)” (Beauvoir, v. 1, 1980, p. 139)
- 14 Alceu Ravello Ferraro, author of this article, passed away in 2019.

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