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**WOMEN'S STUDIES IN PORTUGAL**

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## WOMEN'S STUDIES IN PORTUGAL\*

### 1. Preliminary remarks

Given the academic situation in Portugal, where Women's Studies as an area of higher learning has never been institutionalized, whether in degree-awarding schools or departments or credit-awarding sections of departments, this report will necessarily be a peculiar one, predictably a very short one as well, and impossible to adjust to the suggested outline. What I mean is that, and to give you an example drawn from the field I know best, I would be more prone to read Frank Lentricchia's gender aware interpretation of Wallace Stevens's poetry (in *Ariel and the Police*) as qualifying as Women's Studies (*pace* Susan Gubar and Sandra Gilbert) than Hellen Vendler's supposedly objective and gender-free essays on Adrienne Rich. In other words, Women's Studies, as I understand the concept, must necessarily highlight the protagonism (or its suppression) of women in history, culture and society across centuries and encourage highly specialized work conducted by women in every field; but it must above all imply a theorization of sexual difference and social roles, and draw the necessary consequences of such theorization for the production and reproduction of knowledge, art and

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\* National Report prepared for the Sigma Project in my capacity as Portuguese member of the Scientific Committee on Women's Studies in Higher Education (European Union).

discourse at all political, social, economic and cultural levels. In my report, then, after a brief outline of the system of higher education in Portugal, which does not officially contemplate the field of Women's Studies as an academic discipline (with one forthcoming exception at the postgraduate level), I shall limit myself to tracing a brief picture of the role of contemporary women's movements and feminist awareness in Portuguese society at large and institutions of higher learning in particular (2, 3 and 4); and (5) making a few very personal suggestions as to what I think "needs to be done" or "should be implemented." I shall make no mention of several organizations, mainly sponsored by the Catholic Church, which have traditionally engaged in a lot of work on behalf of underprivileged women, without questioning in the least the fundamental assumptions of patriarchy. More recently, however, there are signs that, at the local, perhaps merely individual level, members of the Catholic Church are carrying out consciousness-raising activities that are truly remarkable. *Fraternizar*, a little paper published in the North of Portugal by Father Manuel Oliveira, besides taking extreme care in using the Portuguese language in a non-sexist way (for example, by always explicitly addressing both female and male readers), frequently features outspoken articles by distinguished theologians of both sexes, which discuss the role of women in society in a clearly feminist perspective, and eloquently denounce discrimination against women, including within the Church itself.

To conclude this brief introduction, I should like to insist on the personal character of this report, for which of course I take full responsibility myself, though I am grateful to several people all over the country for helping with providing information, making suggestions or giving criticism.<sup>1</sup>

## **2. A brief outline of the system of higher education in Portugal**

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Portuguese higher education includes two sectors: the university sector (with thirteen public and seven private universities) and the non-university sector (schools and colleges of higher education, some organized in polytechnic institutes). The last twenty years have witnessed an enormous expansion in the number of institutions (often with regional extension programs) in both sectors, with greater emphasis on non-university higher education institutions. In both sectors there are public institutions and institutions of a private or co-operative nature, which, again, have grown considerably in number in the last decade. The degrees awarded by the latter are academically but not always professionally recognized. There is also a "free autonomous institution of public utility," the Portuguese Catholic University (Universidade Católica Portuguesa), whose status results from provisions of the Concordat between Portugal and the Holy See.

The distinction between "academic" and "vocational" education does not always coincide with the division university / non-university sector, but the historical division is still important both in terms of curricular emphasis and social status and in terms of awards and professional qualifications.

The university sector offers a) undergraduate degree programs ("licenciaturas"), requiring four to six years of study, depending on the field; universities no longer offer shorter undergraduate programs ("bacharelatos"), as they did from 1968 to the late 1970s; the present "licenciatura" results, in most cases, from a reorganization of previous undergraduate plus postgraduate taught programs (three years for a "bacharelato" followed by two or three years for a "licenciatura"); b) postgraduate taught programs (one to two years / two to four semesters after graduation followed by a publicly defended dissertation for a "mestrado" or a postgraduate diploma; diplomas may not require a dissertation); and c) postgraduate degrees by research (the "doutoramento," equivalent to a Ph. D. degree, which nowadays may, in some schools, integrate taught programs of advanced level). Access to postgraduate

degrees by research requires a postgraduate Master's level degree or diploma or, more rarely, a professional curriculum assessed by the school's scientific board. Increasingly, study programs both at undergraduate and postgraduate level are being based on credit systems, though this is far from being the rule. The title of "agregado," required to reach the top of the university teaching career, is often wrongly considered a degree.

The non-university sector offers undergraduate degree programs ("bacharelatos"), requiring three years of study, and awards diplomas of specialized studies ("D. E. S. E.," involving at least one year of study after the "bacharelato") and, as in case of Teacher-training Colleges or Centers, academic diplomas equivalent, for certain purposes, to "licenciaturas" (after four years / eight semesters of study).

Until 1974 there was great uniformity in the curricular structure adopted for undergraduate and graduate degrees by institutions belonging to same sector, although the content of the courses could vary a great deal. There is no law at present outlining a single general curriculum for the programs offered, and universities and higher education institutions formally possess a great deal of autonomy to determine the programs of study prescribed for their awards, although each university or institution of higher learning, both public and private, is required to submit their curricula to ministerial accreditation.

The admission requirements include secondary education (twelve years of study, 4 (primary)+2+3+3+3), national exam in one subject corresponding to the area taken in the last cycle of secondary education ("prova de aferição"), exams in core subjects determined by universities and other institutions of higher learning ("provas específicas"). Candidates over 21 years of age without proper academic qualifications may also be granted access by an *ad hoc* exam. There is *numerus clausus* in all cases.

Despite a large increase in the number of institutions, and a significant increase in the number of students admitted, demand for places is generally

very high and access rates remain extremely low by European standards (the number of students in higher education is nine percent of those in the educational system). Equality of opportunity is further conditioned both by inefficient financial student aid (under ten percent of all higher education students benefited from public grants in 1993-94, when the more or less symbolic fees in public higher education had already been replaced by the new system of progressively higher fees approaching "full-cost fees") and by the fact that the system has of late expanded through the growth of the private sector (where fees are much higher).

The academic year is organized in years, semesters or a combination of both, depending on the institution, program, course or subject. The academic year starts in late September, October or even November, again depending on the institution, and ends in June or July. There are interruptions at Christmas (sixteen days), Carnival (five days) and Easter (sixteen days). In many institutions all teaching is interrupted in February (four to five weeks) for assessment of semester courses and periodic assessment of annual courses. There is a final examinations period in June and July, a limited (two annual courses) second-chance final assessment period in September / October and a third period for final year students in December (without interruption of classes). In some cases, up to a third of the academic year is thus spent in student assessment.

## **2.1 Women's Studies in institutions of higher learning in Portugal**

As I have already indicated, Women's Studies as an independent area of academic knowledge is not officially included in any of the degree programs described above. However, many courses are taught and much research is done in almost all academic fields, which are unquestionably related to Women's Studies. The reasons accounting for the current state of affairs in

Portugal may be more complex than it seems at first sight but are surely related to the course of the country's recent history. Hence the following overview, after which I shall deal with the way the subject area of Women's Studies is actually being gradually contemplated in Portuguese institutions of higher learning.

### **3. The situation of women in Portuguese society**

It is still basically correct to assert that in Portugal no major women's movement exists which could be said to have a strong influence on Portuguese society as a whole. This state of affairs may be related to the forty-eight years of dictatorship under Salazar and later Marcelo Caetano (1926-74), which was sanctioned by the official catholic church, and in the course of which a very strict patriarchal ideology, insidiously imposed from above and firmly distinguishing male public spaces and female private spheres, invaded all sectors of Portuguese life. Earlier, when the monarchical régime was replaced by a secular republic (1910), there seemed to be a significant role for women to play, and laws were actually passed to make this possible. In July 1918, a decree ended the exclusion of women from the legal professions and Regina Quintanilha became the first Portuguese woman attorney. Other very distinguished female intellectuals raised their voices in favor of education, equality and the vote for women (Esteves, 1991). But ideologies are strong and traditions very hard to break. We all know that changes from political dependency (be it from a centralized monarchy or a colonial power) into a democratic republic did not automatically alter the subaltern condition of women (just think of national formations following independence in the Americas). The role of women in the Portuguese Republic continued to be viewed basically as that of discrete companions of the national builders and mothers and raisers of their children. In fact, this hegemonic picture has been hard to replace, and not just in Portugal, as we all know. However, as has been repeatedly emphasized in reports on the status of



women in Portugal in the twentieth century, Salazar's dictatorship during those crucial years contributed decisively to reinforce the social and economic structure of sharply separate spheres and the subalternization of women.

Following the international cultural upheavals of the sixties in France, the United States and elsewhere, which did have a great deal of impact in Portugal, however suppressed (*The New Portuguese Letters*, we recall, were published, and banned, in 1973), the Revolution of 1974 (the 25th of April, the Carnation Revolution) suddenly created the opportunity for radical change. And lots of major changes did occur, as far as women's roles in society are concerned. But, again, traditions, habits and ideologies weigh heavily on the minds and practices of people, including women. It would be nice to say that the Revolution did its job so well at consciousness raising vis-à-vis both sexes that Portuguese women enjoy now full citizenship alongside men and so have no need of women's movements to promote their rights and equality. I am afraid this is not true, whether in the householdplace, workplace or citizenplace (let alone worldplace), particularly (though by no means exclusively) among the less privileged classes. Indeed, on the occasion of the International Woman's Day, some Portuguese newspapers carried recent important statistics on the sexual division of public status and power positions in Portugal. The underrepresentation of women in government, parliament, political parties, workers' unions and foundations of all sorts may be said to be shocking in Portugal as compared to the number of women graduates, professionals and experts. This is perhaps the clearest sign that so far no major women's movement in Portugal has had a far-reaching impact on society as a whole, even though a variety of organizations and movements have mushroomed in the past few years that are no doubt playing a significant role in foregrounding "the woman's question."

The "Comissão para a Igualdade e para os Direitos das Mulheres" (CIDM, Commission for Equality and Women's Rights), made possible by the new

democratic régime, is a governmental organization under the Ministry of Employment and Welfare, which networks with all similar major organizations in Europe and elsewhere, as well as with many NGOs (Silva, 1993). It plays a very important role in promoting Women's Studies generally speaking, particularly as regards discrimination in the workplace, sexual harassment, changing notions of the family and education, women and the new social movements, prostitution, and violence against women, but is far from having a truly strong impact on the definition of economic, social, political and (specially) scientific priorities in Portugal. Formerly the "Comissão da Condição Feminina" (Commission on the Status of Women), for the past fifteen years CIDM has organized, supported or participated in more than twenty-five seminars, symposia, workshops and conferences on various issues directly relating to Women's Studies. The latest major conference, which took place in November 1994, rather in the wake of all the controversial celebrations of the "Discoveries," was titled "O rosto feminino da expansão portuguesa" (The Female Face of Portuguese Expansion) and aimed at "highlighting the participation of women at the onset of universalizing humanism." The organizing committee prepared a careful program which included the speakers' abstracts (*O rosto feminino da expansão portuguesa*, 1994); but on that basis alone, and before the complete proceedings are published, it is hard to tell whether feminist challenges of Western notions of "universalism" were taken into due account at the conference.

CIDM publishes a newsletter (*Notícias*), a quarterly that carries crucial national and international information on women's issues. Often, along with the usual news of women's events all over the world, it just reminds us all, male and female, that equal opportunities for women means nothing else than strict compliance with the law. In fact, the Portuguese law is probably one of the most progressive laws in the world as far as women's rights are concerned. But we all know that there is quite a difference between law in books and law in

action. Portugal is no exception. A very recent report on “Justice in Portugal,” prepared at the Center for Social Studies of the University of Coimbra for the Ministry of Justice, concludes that, though they are nowadays fairly aware of their legal rights, the Portuguese tend to avoid bringing litigation to courts, and women do so usually at all costs, particularly when they are the victims of domestic violence.

CIDM is also responsible for a series of publications dealing with all kinds of women's issues. Besides the regularly updated *Portugal: Situação das mulheres*, now in its 12nd edition), CIDM publishes the generally titled *Cadernos Condição Feminina* (Notes on the Status of Women). Though many academic and commercial publications including titles on women's topics are now being brought out regularly all over the country, *Cadernos Condição Feminina* and *Notícias* still remain a major source of systematic information in the field. This includes scholarship, though CIDM also puts out regularly its very useful *Informação bibliográfica* (Bibliographical News). Besides the *Cadernos*, CIDM publishes a couple of series (“Ditos & Escritos” [Things Spoken and Written] and “Mudar as Atitudes” [Changing the Attitudes]) with several titles already out. Furthermore, the specialized library and archives of CIDM, with their more than six thousand volumes and a wide variety of journals, magazines, clippings, audio and video materials, as well as updated legal information, may be said to be the best incentive for the development of Women's Studies in Portugal. A different kind of incentive has been, created in 1990, the award for the best scholarly essay of the year dealing with women's studies, designated “Mulher Investigação-Carolina Michäelis de Vasconcelos” (Research Woman-Carolina Michäelis de Vasconcelos, Michäelis de Vasconcelos [1851-1925] being one of the first Portuguese women professors [University of Coimbra] and one of the most distinguished ever, male or female).

Another relevant organization, more explicitly academic and specially

devoted to Women's Studies scholarship proper, is "Associação Portuguesa de Estudos sobre as Mulheres" (APEM: Portuguese Association of Women's Studies). Actually launched and continually sponsored by CIDM, APEM may be reasonably expected to help further and consolidate the field as an independent area of study in Portugal. While the administrative board of CIDM, as a governmental organization, is composed of officers of the Ministry of Employment and Welfare holding higher education degrees in many different professional areas (including its president, Ana Vicente, who holds a degree in Modern Languages and Literatures), APEM is overwhelmingly run by scholars and university teachers and researchers. Its president for the period 1994-96 is Lígia Amâncio, a professor of sociology at ISCTE (Institute of Higher Learning for Work and Employment, a university in Lisbon with a strong department of sociology) and author of a scholarly full-length book, formerly a doctoral dissertation submitted to that school, which discusses the social construction of sexual difference and its consequences for discrimination in the workplace (Amâncio, 1994). The newsletter of APEM (*Boletim*), published biennially, carries precious information concerning Women's Studies activities, both in Portugal and abroad. Though there is sometimes some overlapping with *Notícias*, *Boletim* is more decidedly geared towards academic and scholarly accomplishments. In its latest issue (November 1994), several national and international research conferences pertaining to the field are announced or evaluated, indicating that participation of Portuguese scholars from a wide range of fields in Women's Studies activities is steadily increasing. A major piece of news (as reported by Virgínia Ferreira, a founder of APEM and now Editor of *Boletim*, who is a member of CES, teaches sociology at the School of Economics of the University of Coimbra and prepares a doctoral dissertation also dealing with Womens' Studies), which may encourage Portuguese scholars to further participation is that last July, 1994, in Graz (Austria), on the occasion of the Second European Feminist Conference, Coimbra was chosen

as the venue for the third one (1997).

Portuguese historians have just founded a scholarly association named Associação Portuguesa de Investigação Histórica sobre as Mulheres (Portuguese Association of Historical Research on Women), which is expected to contribute significantly to Women's Studies in Portugal.

Another important organization, presided over by psychiatrist Margarida Medina Martins, is Associação de Mulheres contra a Violência (Association of Women against Violence). The Association gathers together many women in different professions (doctors, psychologists, lawyers, social workers, and so on) who are particularly concerned with the escalation of violence in contemporary societies. In early June, 1995, in Lisbon, the Association put together an International Conference on "Household Violence, Rape, Sexual Abuse of Children."

In some professions in Portugal, the tendency for women to organize in independent associations has also been noticed. One of the most important ones is Associação Portuguesa de Mulheres Juristas (Portuguese Association of Women Jurists), perhaps inspired by the International Federation of Women Judges. For very long, at a time when, unlike today, women jurists of consequence were very few in Portugal, the legal profession played a crucial role in Portuguese politics (not to mention the drafting of sexist laws). Though laws are far more progressive these days, women jurists still call for feminist changes to enhance the dignity of persons of the female sex in society at large. The Association has promoted some very interesting activities, mainly having to do with sexual harassment and violence against women, and calling for more feminist laws. Another women's association gaining importance every day is Federação de Mulheres Empresárias e Profissionais (Federation of Professional and Business Women), whose president is currently Teresa Féria. Portuguese women politicians, too, have recently joined an association to denounce the gross imbalance of men and women representatives in

parliament. The association bears the name of a distinguished Portuguese woman intellectual, author and educator at the beginning of the twentieth century (Associação Ana de Castro Osório). What kind of impact these efforts are having on Portuguese society is too early to assess. As I write this report, and as we again approach elections in Portugal, a new organization to promote full citizenship for Portuguese women is taking shape: a group of women from the Portuguese Association of Women Jurists, the Federation of Professional and Business Women, and Ana de Castro Osório Association are putting together an Observatory for Citizenship in Portugal. The Observatory contemplates parity (equal number of female and male members from all sectors of Portuguese society) and has as its main objective to see that adequate representation of women in politics and public life in general is honored.

A decidedly political organization with considerable repercussions among women workers is Movimento Democrático das Mulheres (Women's Democratic Movement, MDM), a branch of the Portuguese Communist Party, which has carried a very significant struggle for what one might call, after Mona Harrington (1994), "gender neutral" equal rights for women, with a predictably strong emphasis on the workplace.

Recently (as of 1993), some Portuguese lesbians created a collective that publishes a quarterly, titled *Lilás: revista lésbica* (Lilac: A Lesbian Journal), which, besides concentrating on making forcefully problematic what Adrienne Rich has called "compulsory heterosexuality" and on interrogating patriarchal values and images in general, provides a great deal of information about distinguished female homossexuals across centuries and all over the world. Of course, the journal is of very limited circulation but the fact that some members of the collective are also beginning to contribute regularly to major Portuguese newspapers and weeklies (even if under pseudonyms), may be considered a measure of their gradual impact on traditional Portuguese culture and societal

mores.

Last, but certainly not least, there is GRAAL: Associação de Carácter Cívico e Cultural (Grail: A Civic and Cultural Association), which for over thirty years has been playing a remarkable, far-reaching role in women's education and consciousness raising. Starting, way before the 1974 Revolution, with a large project based on Paulo Freire's method to bring literacy to underprivileged and mainly rural women, GRAAL has since sponsored countless courses, seminars and other educational initiatives to bring to the forefront "the question of the feminine." Recently, in accord with developments in the European Union, GRAAL has launched many research projects in conjunction, e. g., with NOW, which deal with the crucial area of training and educating educators and trainers. The role of women in structural adjustment based on the ECDO report is also one of the overall concerns of the research regularly conducted at GRAAL. It can be said that "gender differences" (Harrington, 1994) is the underlying philosophy of GRAAL, that is to say, that men and women are culturally (if not essentially) different in their being-in-the world and that designs for equality and equal opportunities must respect that difference. Key figures in GRAAL are former Portuguese Prime Minister Maria de Lourdes Pintasilgo (1980), Teresa Santa Clara Gomes, representative for the Socialist Party in parliament, and Isabel Allegro de Magalhães, professor of literature at the New University of Lisbon and author of many books and articles dealing with Women's Studies (1987; 1995).

#### **4. Evolving Women's Studies in Portuguese institutions of higher learning**

An institutionalized area of Women's Studies does not yet exist as such in Portuguese universities and institutions of higher education. There are no departments of Women's Studies, no degrees in Women's Studies are awarded, no official credit-giving course in Women's Studies is offered in any

major Portuguese school. The very first indication that institutionalization may eventually begin to be seriously considered in Portugal is the recently advertised piece of news that the Open University is scheduled to start an M. A. program in Women's Studies in October 1995, under the supervision of Professor Maria Beatriz Niza da Silva. The prospectus announcing the program rightly claims the pioneer nature of the course proposed and defines potential candidates as graduates in the Humanities and the Social Sciences who look for adequate background in the field, either because they already hold jobs for which extra training in legal, economic and sociological problems pertaining to female issues may be useful; or because they are interested in pursuing advanced academic research in the field. Indeed, one of the explicit objectives of the program is "to provide graduates in the Humanities and the Social Sciences with proper credentials to engage in scholarly production in the field, and professionals working for different institutions and governmental organizations with adequate theoretical and practical expertise." This degree program was formally announced last March 30-31, at the Center Jean Monnet in Lisbon, by a Seminar on Women's Studies. The Seminar was presided over by Professor Maria José Ferro Tavares, Vice-Rector of the Open University, included a key-note address by Maria de Lurdes Pintasilgo and brought together many long-time activists as well as several women scholars in different kinds of disciplines who have gradually become interested in the field.

No other Portuguese school offers programs, let alone degrees, in the field specifically designated and recognized as Women's Studies. Something else is the insertion of courses clearly related to women's, feminist or gender studies (though rarely identified as such) in different kinds of programs, particularly in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Education, in most Portuguese universities. For example, one of the current M. A. program in Anglo-American Studies at the University of Coimbra includes a seminar on African-American literature that has a strong race, gender and class



component. On the other hand, at the University of Aveiro a new M. A. in English has just been created which combines seminars in Postcolonial, Film and Women Studies (so designated).

As a matter of fact, a lot of work is being conducted in institutions of higher learning in Portugal, which may and should be understood as contributing to the increasing awareness of feminist issues and methodologies on the part of scholars in different fields, as well as to the gradual development of the area, if not as a specific and independent academic discipline, at least as a theoretical stance that must no longer be ignored by researchers of different persuasions and dealing with different kinds of topics. However, it is far from clear whether the best strategy to promote true equality, as well as full citizenship for women, is to push the creation and institutionalization of a separate area of study specifically labeled as Women's Studies in Portuguese universities and other schools of higher learning (an issue that is, at any rate, controversial among many feminists themselves all over the world [Barrett, 1992]), or to encourage interdisciplinary work with a strong feminist theoretical approach in all fields of research, as well as feminist-inspired changes of form and content on all levels of the educational system, starting with elementary education. To be sure, as a recent bibliography indicates (Campos, 1989), a lot of research has been conducted in Portugal in the course of the past ten years, supposedly having women's issues as a focus (women in the workplace, family, children, sexuality, birth control, abortion, sexual difference, female discourse and sociolinguistics, famous women in history, culture and science, female authors, female literary figures, feminist literary theory, and so on); however, in a large majority of the studies quoted, the theoretical framework adopted (when and if one can speak of a theoretical framework at all) has nothing to do with interdisciplinary approaches, let alone feminist theory. Rather, and with rare exceptions, most studies, though focusing on female protagonists, stick to fairly conservative approaches and end up with uninspiring conclusions as far as

what is generally meant by Women's Studies and its potential for questioning patriarchy and promoting social change is concerned. On the other hand, it should be noted that, though the percentage of women in the highest echelons of education and advanced research in Portuguese academic institutions is relatively high as compared to what happens in core countries in the West (Ruivo, 1987), apparently research priorities continue to be defined from above and according to rather conservative and canonical disciplinary criteria. This, however, applies to all academic areas of study. As regards Women's Studies, an important recent development may well be the creation, at ISCTE, of a research center on Gender Studies, which calls itself GEN. Another interdisciplinary center for Women's Studies was recently created at the University of Madeira (Centro Interdisciplinar de Estudos da Mulher — CIEM / UMa). But perhaps because the group of people involved in it are all young scholars still working towards their PH. D., the center has as yet promoted no activities with any significance. One of the new private universities, Universidade Portucalense Infante D. Henrique, in Porto, has also recently created a Centro de Estudos Femininos (Center for Feminine Studies). Innovative interdisciplinary research in a wide variety of fields and resorting to different transgressive methodologies (including feminist approaches) is also being conducted at Centro de Estudos Sociais of the University of Coimbra (Center for Social Studies, CES), a non degree-awarding research center which hosts many fellows with a wide variety of backgrounds and holding degrees in many different kinds of disciplines. More recently, at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Coimbra a few scholars created a a Group of Feminist Studies (GREF: Grupo de Estudos Feministas), which also aims at interdisciplinary work and intervention in the field.

Themes, problematics and theoretical approaches related to what is generally known as Women's Studies, though not so labeled, are widely, if discretely, spread in Portuguese universities and other institutions of higher

learning, particularly in the humanities and the social sciences. This is certainly true of most schools, but my greater wealth of information comes directly or indirectly from the Faculty of Letters and the School of Economics of the University of Coimbra; The Faculty of Letters of the University of Lisbon; The Faculty of Human and Social Sciences of the New University of Lisbon; ISCTE; The Faculty of Letters and the Faculty of Psychology and Science Education of the University of Porto; The University of Minho; the University of Aveiro; and the Portuguese Catholic University. This is not the place to give a full account, nor would it have been possible to gather an exhaustive list in so short a period, but the amount of teaching and research actually being done in areas or perspectives recognizably relating to Women's Studies is quite impressive. Programs and projects concerned with the teaching of and research in languages, literatures, cultures and societies increasingly include specialized courses on women's history, women's writing, feminist literary theory, sociolinguistics and sexual difference, the dialectics of race and gender, economy and female work, women's migration and integration, family relations and violence, child abuse, sexual harassment in the workplace, sexual difference and the professions, gender studies, gay studies and so on. In literary studies, more women authors are being selected by students of both sexes as subjects of dissertation topics and, more importantly, feminist theory (in a more or less discrete manner) is gradually being privileged in studies dealing with both male and female authors. In history, the hidden histories of women, centuries-old discrimination against women, and the wide range of women's cultures and traditions gradually attract the attention of young scholars, both male and female (Vaquinhas, 1993). The new M. A. program in Contemporary Economic and Social History at the Faculty of Letters of the University of Coimbra, scheduled to start in October 1995, offers a seminar on The Women in the Contemporary Society: Comparative History, taught by Professor Irene Vaquinhas. Similar things are slowly happening in

anthropology, psychology, sociology, linguistics and science education. As a result, and this is arguably the most relevant contribution to the field, a large variety of M. A. and Ph. D. dissertations discussing openly Women Studies and overtly claiming feminist theories and methodologies are being submitted in the different disciplines and subject areas of Portuguese institutions of higher learning, specially in the humanities and social sciences. Some of these dissertations are quickly finding their way into print. I believe that the first doctoral dissertation dealing explicitly and self-consciously with Women's Studies, though officially and institutionally submitted in Portuguese Studies, approved by a Portuguese university was Cecília Barreira's "Retrato da burguesa em Lisboa, 1890-1930: universos femininos em Portugal" (diss. Universidade Nova de Lisboa, 1991) (A Portrait of the Bourgeois Woman in Lisbon, 1890-1930: Feminine Worlds in Portugal). Later, this study was commercially published (Barreira, 1993). In January 1993, the extremely conservative Law School of the University of Lisbon awarded the doctoral degree to Teresa Beleza, whose dissertation dealt clearly with Women Studies: "Mulheres, direito e crime: ou a perplexidade de Cassandra" (Women, the Law and Crime: or, Cassandra's Perplexity). Since it was previously known that the distinguished law professors evaluating this remarkable piece of work were most unwilling to accept sexual difference as a *bona fide* scientific category, the public defense of the dissertation turned out to be truly public, with an inordinately large audience and the presence of the media. Only a few months ago, Teresa Joaquim, a well-known member of CIDM and APEM, earned her doctoral degree in the Department of Anthropology of ISCTE with a dissertation titled "Menina e moça: A construção social da feminilidade" (Female and Young: The Social Construction of Femininity ["menina e moça" being a famous title in classical Portuguese literature]). In the field of literary studies, the number of doctoral topics dealing with women authors and contemplating feminist issues is increasing steadily. More interestingly, many

academic studies of canonical male authors are beginning to be more and more aware of the importance of sexual difference as a category of analysis.

Gradually, publishers are also bringing out more books addressing the same kinds of issues, and academic journals in all fields are carrying many more articles pertaining to feminist criticism. A major publication, which may eventually contribute to the development of Women's Studies in Portugal, is due to start appearing in October 1995. I am referring to *A história da vida quotidiana em Portugal* (The History of Daily Life in Portugal), which features many essays on women's and feminist issues (Barreira, 1995). Perhaps even more important in this regard is the creation of the Portuguese section of the International Federation for Research in Women's History, an initiative of a group of professors of a private university in Oporto (Universidade Portucalense Infante D. Henrique). Its main objective is to promote research on women's history in Portugal. On the other hand, recent reports on migration and integration studies clearly suggest the need for the strong international networking of Portuguese scholars in these areas also (Lutz, 1994; Hanmer, 1994).

An important field of academic activity into which Women's Studies topics are quickly finding their way in Portugal is that of conferences, colloquia, symposia, seminars and workshops. Two major conferences in 1985, actually specializing in women's issues, are worth mentioning because of the repercussions they had for a broader networking of scholars concerned with Women's Studies in Portugal. In Lisbon, the Instituto de Ciências Sociais (Institute for Social Sciences, ICS) organized a large conference titled "As Mulheres em Portugal" (Women in Portugal). Its proceedings were published in a special issue with the same title, *As mulheres em Portugal* (1986), of the journal of ICS, *Análise Social*. On the other hand, the Instituto de História Económica e Social (Institute of Social and Economic History) of the Faculty of Letters of the University of Coimbra put together an even larger conference

titled "A Mulher na Sociedade Portuguesa: Visão Histórica e Perspectivas Actuais" (Women in Portuguese Society: An Historical Survey and Present Situation). The papers presented were published the following year in two thick volumes (*A mulher na sociedade portuguesa*, 1986). Furthermore, all major scholarly and professional organizations in the humanities and social sciences are beginning to include in the programs of their regular conferences sections or workshops dealing with Women's Studies. This is, for example, the case of Sociology, Anthropology, Psychology, Philosophy, Linguistics, Anglo-American Studies or Comparative Literature. Significant is also the fact that an increasing number of Portuguese women scholars in a wide variety of fields are joining and participating in international networks mainly concerned with equality of opportunities and full citizenship for women.

In science and technology, most scholars do not seem to be interested in feminist issues and theories as directly relating to their fields of research. One of the reasons may be related, whether explicitly or not, to many Portuguese women scientists' concern that assessment of their merit may suffer from gender considerations (e. g., judgements of the type, "good for a woman"). It is worth noting, though, that some recent work conducted by feminist scientists in the United States (e. g., Donna Haraway) has been influential in Portugal within the social sciences and the humanities, whereas the hard sciences, to the best of my knowledge, have tended to remain unaffected. But perhaps the major question is still the lack of adequate data and statistics by gender concerning numbers of women in science education, research and decision-making positions (Ruivo, 1993). In the article just quoted, Ruivo concludes that though in Portuguese universities, women scholars have been easily reaching full professorship in all academic fields, including the so-called hard sciences (e. g., theoretical physics, mathematics, biology, biochemistry, biotechnology, medical sciences), indeed, to a higher proportion than in many of the advanced countries of the North, they remain grossly underrepresented

in decision-making posts. This concerns mainly the definition of scientific priorities and allocation of funds. A detailed recent study by Lúcia Amâncio and Patrícia Ávila, based on a fairly large survey all over the country, unsurprisingly suggests that traditional notions of sexual difference and stereotypical sexual roles go on interfering with the balanced integration of women scholars in the Portuguese scientific community (Amâncio and Ávila, 1995). It is nevertheless true that such an integration proceeds steadily in Portugal.<sup>2</sup>

### **5. What needs to be done?**

I should like to begin by quoting Prof. Rosi Braidotti's suggested reply to this question, as transcribed in the minutes of the first meeting of the Scientific Committee (Brussels, December 22, 1994): "The existence of Women's Studies courses has to be defended because they increase the awareness of the status of women which helps to fulfill the Maastricht Treaty; because they offer professional training and outlets to women (for example policy making and media); and finally because they train students for future research which increases the quality of research in the field of Gender Studies and Equal Opportunities."

Basically, I do not disagree with Braidotti's reply. The status of women (or, in many cases, often the lack of it, particularly among the less privileged classes) should be carefully studied, in comparison with the status of men, so as to allow for much needed corrections, in Portugal and Europe as elsewhere. Specific credit-giving Women's Studies *courses* integrated in interdisciplinary degree-awarding *programs* may certainly be made to play that role. But I would like to submit that this distinction between Women's Studies courses taken for credit in programs in other disciplines leading on to a degree is possibly a

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<sup>2</sup> A recent overview of the state of the art in Portugal, based on interviews with Madalena Barbosa, Virgínia Ferreira and Teresa Joaquim, and titled "Modernization and Emancipation from Above: Women's Studies in Portugal," is forthcoming in the *European Journal of Women's Studies*. I am grateful to Virgínia Ferreira for having let me see the galley-proofs.

good one in terms of the goals to be accomplished by our efforts: full citizenship for women in all sectors of public and private life. For the simple reason that I would be concerned lest Women's Studies degrees and degree-awarding programs end up pushing more female scholars and professionals than desirable to a new, more sophisticated ghetto (meaning, more sophisticated than *Küche, Kinder* and *Kirche*). In the future, we might see many full women professors in Women's Studies in universities all over Europe, and very few in other fields, such as Political Science, Economy, Business Administration or Science and Technology, which are more closely linked in their job outlets to positions of power and societal control (indeed, this may well be already the case in some core countries). Besides, all those "other" fields (say, sociology, economics, literary and cultural studies, engineering, medicine) may arguably be said to be if not more relevant than Women's Studies (so designated), at least, more encompassing. After all (I can almost hear the argument), human persons of the female sex are still only roughly one half of the world's population. What we need, therefore, is a fuller "awareness of the status of women" in society at large. Steady work on consciousness raising in all areas of knowledge and in the professions is what is called for.

Perhaps Portugal (precisely because here, as our colleagues from NOISE so charmingly stated in the first documents for the preparation of the assessment we are all involved in, people with backgrounds in Women's Studies strictly speaking are "very difficult to be found"), provides an adequate ground for the development of feminist studies in higher education without falling into the pitfalls of disengaged Women's Studies academic programs, which will predictably attract mostly female students and rapidly exhaust their resources and outlets. By the same token, all other areas of knowledge will remain unaffected by a feminist perspective.

What I would like to see evolve in Portuguese institutions of higher learning



is the serious study of and cogent recourse to feminist theory and methodologies. By this I mean the scholarly study of sexual difference for a better understanding of the impact of the social construction of sex (what in English some feminists continue to distinguish as "gender," albeit with increasing misgivings) on life, culture, science and society. Because all the theorizing and criticism have been overwhelmingly conducted in English and (to a lesser degree) French, a deep and wide discussion of the concepts is called for, so as to allow for adequate, rigorous and suggestive formulations in Portuguese. In recent years, the Portuguese language has been invaded by a blatantly imprecise, grossly mongrel terminology that runs the risk of discrediting the field (though this is far from applying to Woman's Studies alone). A network of researchers in the different Portuguese universities, networking in turn with international feminist research centers, should be encouraged (and financed) to engage in serious work to produce a descriptive dictionary of feminist theoretical terms. Reliable translations of key concepts, based on a careful analysis and assessment of the state of the art and taking into account the by no means negligible tradition of Portuguese feminism, is urgently needed. To be sure, advanced research in the field should be firmly encouraged. But rather than independently taught programs awarding degrees in Women's Studies (an option which, after all, cannot be said to be the most highly recommended one by most feminist scholars in most Western countries), strong interdisciplinary feminist research institutes should be created at institutions of higher learning with the purpose of encouraging advanced academic research specializing in Women's Studies and offering courses in Women's Studies to be taken by students in as great a variety of fields as possible. Critical awareness of issues in Women's Studies is what we need to have included at all levels in the Portuguese higher educational system. Such a goal could be accomplished by granting Womens' Studies and Feminist research centers some degree of influence on curriculum building

and program developing. I suggest that courses at first offered as options and targetting areas deemed particular insensitive to women's issues would eventually become adopted as required courses by certain degree-awarding programs. Education, language teaching, teacher training are the first ones that come to mind; but consider also the needs in psychology, sociology, journalism and communication arts, law, business administration, and (last but not least) the medical sciences.

On the other hand, in the Portuguese society in general it is imperative that old stereotypes of maleness and femaleness continue to be radically challenged. Such an outcome cannot be accomplished without more structural and content changes in the educational system at all levels, starting with the elementary and secondary. The obvious way to start is language. Without a critical awareness of the subtle sexist uses of language still rampant in our society the desired social change runs the risk of continuing to be thwarted. Students must learn from the very beginning, female students in particularly, that there are alternatives to the picture of sexual, social and professional differences and definitions still hegemonically depicted (even in textbooks) by patriarchal society in all corners of the world. So that we all stop staring at distinguished women in positions of power as marvelous and extraordinary exceptions (the way we used to speak romantically of "men of genius") and begin finally to consider them the inevitable result of talent (of course), but also choice and fair opportunity.

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