

# ***Gender, History and Education: A Qualitative Survey based on the Field-Specific Database Hecumen<sup>1</sup>***

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**Abstract:** Since its advent in the 1970s, Women's and Gender History has produced frequent and multiple historiographical reviews and methodological reflections. These surveys depict a combination of assertive celebrations, theoretical hesitations, methodological alliances, and epistemological frictions that are a testimony to the dynamic and healthy state of the discipline. The field of History of Women's Education has also regularly produced its own literature reviews, which have provided a zoomed-in and distinct portrait of the myriad ways in which informal education, self-education and institutionalised schooling have simultaneously permitted and conditioned both agentic and normative gendered identities, networks, practices, and processes of becoming across time and place. Seeking to add to these literature reviews, this article stands for an introductory qualitative historiographical survey that, focusing on some of the theoretical turns that have characterised the Humanities and Social Sciences, puts into play Hecumen – a field-specific database designed within the framework of our state-funded project «Connecting History of Education: International networks, publications and global dissemination». The paper argues that, in line with Women's and Gender History historiographical reviews, both Hecumen-retrieved articles and contributors to this special issue reflect the multiple, complex, conflicting, and intersecting strands that characterise the field of History of Women's Education. This study builds on the desire to encourage fellow academics to put into play Hecumen's search aid to explore further sophisticated understandings on past and current trends in History of (Women's) Education and hence venture into sharp-edged new scholarship in dialogue with theoretical turns.

**Keywords:** History of Women's Education; archival turn; affective turn; digital turn; narrative turn; auto/biographical turn; spatial turn; Hecumen

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## 1. Introduction

As illustrated in the introduction to this special issue, the field of Women's and Gender History have produced regular and numerous historiographical reviews and methodological reflections that attests to the creativity, vitality, and rich diversity in terms of sources, methods and themes that has characterised the field since its blossoming in the 1970s. Tracing the origins of this surge, in her article «Women's History: A Retrospective from the United States», Bonnie G. Smith sketches the intellectual productions and amateur and professional academic paths of female historians back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in the West and beyond, to suggest that «the claim that women of the 1970s and thereafter invented women's history simply does not stand up to the evidence» (Smith, 2010, p. 727).

Reflecting upon this burgeoning historiographical landscape, in her introduction to her 2013 *Women's History Review* special issue «The imagined communities of women's history: current debates and emerging themes, a rhizomatic approach», Kathryn Gleadle opts for focusing on the «emergent features of feminist history since 2001» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 524). She does so by way of «employ[ing] Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the 'rhizome' – a root structure which grows in unpredictable and manifold directions – as a means to conceptualise the complicated intellectual shifts within the field» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 524). This field, in her view, is located «in a striking paradox, a state of aporia» – «both 'normalised' and yet perilously marginalised» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 527). According to Gleadle, the metaphor of the rhizome, unlike «arboreal narratives», «can provide a nuanced conceptualisation for unpicking the intellectual patterns of feminist history» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 525). This is so because, according to her, «[t]he rejection of conventional narrative allows sensitivity to the circuitous routes of some approaches, the ruptures in others: their refrains, subtle twists, and lateral stems» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 525). Likewise, the author states, «[i]n tracing its roots backwards, forward and sideways, it can help us to remain mindful of the many points of contact, interaction and inspiration of earlier feminist scholarship» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 525).

Gleadle's unpacking of the intellectual patterns of feminist history starts off assessing the «molar» – i.e., «the static, the mass, the aggregate structure» – in feminist history, that is, «the place of women's history within the academy» – for example, in textbooks, in subfields, and in library cataloguing (Gleadle, 2013, p. 526). This brief assessment is followed by a rhizomatic cartography of the «molecular» – i.e., «the ceaseless, mobile atoms – here conceived as the dynamic agents who comprise feminist history» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 526). This rhizomatic cartography of the «molecular» takes the form of a selected synthesis of the themes and trajectories that have characterised feminist history since 2001, which show «future twists and configurations as the various shoots react and grow in creative synergy with other, heterogeneous influences» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 526). These themes and trajectories stand for «the rhizomatic cartographies through which our field unfolds: the cluster of diverse roots which connect to it amounting to an intense plateau of inquiry» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 528).

As the author concludes, feminist history is «a rhizome burgeoning in all directions from within the historical profession», where «[f]resh nodes of departure have intersected with more prolonged conduits of inquiry to produce modulated and complicated intellectual chronologies [...] leading to innovative lines of flight in historical analysis» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 535). Indeed, for Gleadle, feminist history is construed as the deleuzoguattarian plateaus, that is, those:

freely constituted regions with no directive form of organisation [...] [that] come into being where the intensity of connections reaches a peak ... [This apex] supports a continued state of dynamism and energy which can be resuscitated or redirected into other activities and lines of connection (Gleadle, 2013, p. 535).

Like deleuzoguattarian plateaus, in Gleadle's eyes, feminist history operates within «opportunities for multiple points of contact, unexpected insights and inventive variations», constituting in consequence «a dynamic and simmering entity» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 535).

The field of History of Women's Education has regularly produced its own historiographical reviews, which have offered a zoomed-in and nuanced depiction of the manifold ways in which education, understood as informal education, self-education and institutionalised schooling, has shaped both agentic and normative gendered identities (e.g., Essen and Rogers, 2003; Goodman, 2003; Flecha García, 2004; Robles Sanjuán, 2004; Grana Gil, 2004; Watts, 2005; Rogers, 2007; Flecha García, 2007; Benso Calvo & González Pérez, 2007; Tikhonov Sigrist, 2009; Spencer, 2010; Goodman, 2012; Thivend, 2012; Rogers, 2014; Flecha García, 2018; Tinkler, Spencer and Langhamer, 2017; Krampfl, Picco and Thivend, 2017; Anderson-Faithful and Goodman, 2020; Anderson-Faithful and Goodman, 2020a; Goodman and Anderson-Faithful, 2020; Laot, 2021).<sup>2</sup>

Thus, for example, taking Gleadle's imagined communities of women's history as a starting point, in their introduction to their 2020 *Women's History Review* special issue «Turns and twists in histories of women's education» Sue Anderson-Faithful and Joyce Goodman zoom in on «some of the dynamic and heterogeneous methodological developments and manifold tracks that characterise the history of girls' and women's education» (Anderson-Faithful and Goodman, 2020, p. 363). Their literature review unpacks, in this subfield of Women's and Gender History, the «“fresh nodes of departure” that run alongside “more prolonged conduits of inquiry”» that likewise produce «“modulated and complicated intellectual chronologies”» (Anderson-Faithful and Goodman, 2020, p. 363).

To do so, the authors draw on Joan Scott's discussion of the feminist paradox to illustrate the way the contributors to their special issue tease out the «ambiguities, complexities, tensions (and resistances)» of the female historical subjects they study (Anderson-Faithful and Goodman, 2020, p. 369). As they explain, in her book *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Scott, 1996), Scott singles out a feminist impasse: «that of claiming access to masculine privileges

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<sup>2</sup> This bibliography, inevitably emplaced and limited, has been assembled on account of the language and geographical regions we are conversant with.

while making claims on behalf of the culturally gendered construct of the category of women» (Anderson-Faithful and Goodman, 2020, p. 368). In order to overcome this impasse, Scott calls for «deploying gender as a mediator of power (whether ascribed, assumed, internalised or transgressed)» with a view to evidence «the complicated, contradictory, and ambivalent ways gender has emerged in different social and political discourses and in the modes of thought and epistemological assumptions that inhere in paradoxes» (Anderson-Faithful and Goodman, 2020, p. 368). Seeking to respond to Scott's notion of feminist paradox, which, as Anderson-Faithful and Goodman alert, scholars such as Maria Tamboukou have contested (Tamboukou, 2016), the contributors to their special issue

frame histories of women's education that deal with complexity and ambiguity[,] [and] they focus on methodological approaches that shift researchers' attention from descriptions of content – the 'what' that researchers derive from the sources with which they work – to focus on how things merge and 'become' through processes, practices, doings and actions (Anderson-Faithful and Goodman, 2020, p. 369).

Indeed, these contributors illustrate the ways in which the reality and agency of the historical subjects they examine move away from Scott's idea of feminist paradox, which in the eyes of Tamboukou (Tamboukou, 2016), as Anderson-Faithful and Goodman paraphrase, is underpinned by «a structuralist understanding of pre-existent discourses, ideas and practices that fails to capture the dynamic interplay of ideas, conditions and practices» (Anderson-Faithful and Goodman, 2020, p. 369).

Both Gleadle's molecular cartography and Anderson-Faithful and Goodman's «turns and twists» stand for the «routes which women's history has taken» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 526), including the contributions to their respective special issues. In both cases, their historiographical introductions are somehow underpinned by a loose mapping out of some of the conceptual turns that have characterised the Humanities and Social Sciences in the past decades, including Women's and Gender History and the History of Women's Education. Their historiographical reviews at some points explicitly comment on and at others implicitly dialogue with the affective turn, the archival turn, the auto/biographical turn, the global turn, the transnational turn, the material turn, the sensory turn, the posthuman turn, and the visual turn. This article builds on the desire to add to these Women's and Gender History and History of Women's Education methodological reflections by providing an introductory qualitative historiographical review that focuses on some of these theoretical turns. To do so, it puts into play Hecumen – a field-specific database designed within the framework of our state-funded project «Connecting History of Education: International networks, publications and global dissemination».

## 2. Hecumen

«Connecting History of Education. International networks, research and global dissemination» is a state-funded research project (Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation, reference PID2019-105328GB-I00). Led by Andrés Payá Rico (Valencia

University) and José Luis Hernández Huerta (Valladolid University), the project brings together more than twenty researchers from Spain, Greece, Italy, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, and Chili. Its main goal is to globally map socialization spaces, networks of communication and international investigation in History of Education; analyse historiographically present and future educational challenges; and generate tools for research and dissemination adapted to the demands and needs of the global community of historians of education.

This article puts into play one of the digital outcomes of this third goal, which specifically seeks to capitalize on information and communication technologies with a view to developing digital tools for network research tailored for historians of education. This outcome takes the form of a field-specific database – Hecumen. As we explain in detail elsewhere, Hecumen is a data source designed to offer historians of education a field-specific finding aid. Its database is made up of bibliographic information obtained from 11 leading international journals in the field of History of Education as indexed by Scopus (cf. Table 1 below). The years of publication of these journals span from 1961 to 2022 (Roda-Segarra et al, 2023; Roda-Segarra et al, 2023a; Roda-Segarra, 2023; Roda-Segarra, forthcoming; Roda-Segarra et al, 2024).

The bibliographic metadata gathered to build up the footing of Hecumen is of a quantitative nature and has been grouped under the following headings: data about the authors: name and country of institutional affiliation; data about the publication: title, abstract, keywords, name of journal, pages, global citations, DOI and language; and data about the journals: name, ISSN, country of publication and region. In addition, Hecumen includes field-specific qualitative data on the periods and topics studied – a sorting out that has been manually carried out by the «Connecting History of Education» team. The qualitative metadata items are: topics studied in each document (which follow the categories defined in the «Connecting History of Education» project more broadly): Gender and equality; Inclusion and attention to diversity; Influences, transfers and transnationalisation of education; Educational innovation and pedagogical renewal; Social and educational movements; Not specified (generic category for those items that cannot be classified in any of the previous ones); epochs analysed in each document (Antiquity, Middle Ages, Modern and Contemporary); and specific timespans studied in each document (i.e., centuries).

This combination of generic quantitative metadata with field-specific qualitative data makes of Hecumen a unique database that permits conducting specific and multilevel complex engine searches; having a panoramic view of research in the field of History of Education; mapping out relevant/missing areas of research; and, ultimately, keeping up to date with the research produced by historians of education. Seeking to put into play Hecumen, this article focuses on the qualitative item «Gender and equality», a keyword search that permits filtering turn-related data in the field of History of Women's Education, as we now move on to illustrate with the aid of the results obtained from this finding aid.

### 3. A turn-related keyword query in Hecumen

The historiographical reviews listed in the introduction to this article are virtually all underpinned by a qualitative and hermeneutical approach. Few have explored a quantitative method that provides a statistical overview of publications in the field. Reflecting the digital turn that has arguably pierced the field of History in the last 20 years, a notable example is «What, Where, When, and Sometimes Why: Data Mining Two Decades of Women’s History Abstracts», by Sharon Block and David Newman (Block and Newman, 2011). By means of data mining c.31,000 women’s history-focused abstracts extracted from two databases (America: History and Life and Historical Abstracts), Block and Newman’s article offers a quantitative survey of post-c.1450 Women’s History publications. This approach permits the authors «to explore the place of women and women’s history within the historical field in general, and within regional and chronologic subfields in particular» (Block and Newman, 2011, p. 82). They conclude that this quantitative method points the way towards a questioning of «two popular beliefs about women’s history: that women’s historians are overly-focused on recent history and that women’s and gender history is an ever increasing proportion of the professions» (Block and Newman, 2011, p. 81). Seeking to add to Block and Newman’s work, in the past we have offered an introductory *quantitative* historiographical survey of History of Women’s Education with a view to mapping out the field (Simon Martin and Grau 2023). We have done so by putting to use Hecumen. Seeking to extend this exploitation of Hecumen, in this article we venture into a brief *qualitative* survey by focusing on the theme of this special issue.

Our Hecumen multilevel search has consisted initially of filtering by qualitative theme only, i.e., «Gender and equality». Hence, our search includes all journals listed in the database (including all their quantitative bibliographical metadata), all the epochs analysed in each document (Antiquity, Middle Ages, Modern and Contemporary), and all the specific timespans (i.e., centuries) studied in each document. The result of our search showcases the total number of documents published in the 11 journals and manually categorized as «Gender and equality» – that is, results that fall within the scope of History of Women’s Education –, which arises to 549. Following the classification implemented by Scopus (from where Hecumen gathers the data), «documents» stand for articles, notes, reviews, conference papers, and editorials. To facilitate the exploitation of these data, Hecumen also provides the number of «Gender and equality» *articles* as such, which arises to 428. Their distribution by journal is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Documents and articles published in 11 History of Education journals indexed by Scopus and manually categorized under the heading «Gender and equality».

Journal	Total documents	Articles
<i>History of Education</i>	175	148
<i>Paedagogica Historica</i>	126	118
<i>História da Educação</i>	58	24

<i>History of Education and Children's Literature</i>	57	35
<i>History of Education Quarterly</i>	41	31
<i>HSE Social and Education History</i>	37	35
<i>History of Education Review</i>	19	18
<i>Histoire de l'éducation</i>	17	8
<i>Historia y Memoria de la Educación</i>	10	4
<i>Espacio, Tiempo y Educación</i>	6	4
<i>Childhood in the Past: An International Journal</i>	3	3
	Total	Total
	549	428

Starting at this first layer of query, which retrieves, as mentioned, 428 «gender, history and education» articles, our next methodological step has consisted of focusing on this special issue' specific theme: the theoretical and methodological turns that have characterised the Humanities and Social Sciences in the last decades. To this end, we have first made a list of those turns we are familiar with: the affective, the archival, the auto/biographical, the digital, the emotional, the global, the material, the narrative, the sensory, the posthuman, the spatial, the transnational, and the visual. Next, we have further filtered our Hecumen query by searching turn-related keywords (as they appear in the title, the abstract or the keywords section of each article):<sup>3</sup> e.g., «turn», «affective», «archival», «autobiographical», «biographical», «digital», «emotional», «global», «material», «narrative», «sensory», «posthuman», «spatial», «transnational», and «visual». In order to widen this query, both the root of these keywords as well as semantically-related words were also searched: e.g., «affect», «archive», «biograph», «auto/biograph», «autobiograph», «letter», «epistolar[y]», «memoir», «diar[y]», «emotion[s]», «materiality», «sens[es]», «space», «photo», «picture», «image». The results are quantitatively synthesised in Table 2. The keywords, their morphological roots and their semantically-related words that appear in it stand for examples of queries. Other turn-related terms could have been queried in line with specific research needs.

**Table 2.** Retrieval of turn-related keyword search.

Name of turn	Keyword searched	Results
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<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that those journals that publish mostly in a non-English language have a publishing policy that involves translating the title, abstract and keywords into English (as well as French, German, Portuguese, and/or Italian). Hence our search has used words in English only. Notwithstanding, this keyword search would certainly benefit from a complementary query involving keywords in the abovementioned languages.

The affective turn	«affective turn»	1 hit
	«affective»	2 hits
	«affect»	14 hits
The archival turn	«archival turn»	0 hits
	«archival»	13 hits
	«archive»	29 hits
The auto/biographical turn	«auto/biograph»	1 hit
	«autobiograph»	10 hits
	«biograph»	32 hits
	«letter»	45 hits
	«correspondence»	18 hits
	«epistolar»	5 hits
	«memoir»	3 hits
	«diar»	22 hits
The digital turn	«digital turn»	0 hits
	«digital»	2 hits
The emotional turn	«emotional turn»	0 hits
	«emotional»	13 hits
	«emotion»	61 hits
The global turn	«global turn»	0 hits
	«global»	11 hits
The material turn	«material turn»	0 hits
	«material»	35 hits
	«materiality»	5 hits
The narrative turn	«narrative turn»	0 hits
	«narrative»	32 hits
The sensory turn	«sensory turn»	1 hit
	«sensory»	1 hit
	«sens»	21 hits
	«senses»	0 hits
The posthuman turn	«posthuman»	0 hits
	«post-human»	0 hits



The spatial turn	«spatial turn»	0 hits
	«spatial»	1 hit
	«space»	30 hits
	«place»	31 hits
	«location»	3 hits
The transnational	«transnational turn»	0 hits
	«transnational»	16 hits
The visual turn	«visual turn»	0 hits
	«visual»	9 hits
	«photo»	5 hits
	«picture»	3 hits
	«image»	43 hits

Table 2 is a quantitative synthesis of the results Hecumen has retrieved of the turn-related search we conducted. Full results include a dataset with (1) the title of the article that contains, either in its title, abstract or keyword section the word queried, (2) the name(s) of the author(s), (3) the abstract, (4) the language(s) of publication, (5) the name of the journal, and (6) the number of cross-referenced citations. This dataset can be exported in .xls format. The full dataset being very extensive (c.170 articles), in this article we have opted for summarizing this query in the form a quantitative synthesis of the number of hits per keyword search.

Our next step has consisted of cleaning our data, i.e., selecting those hits that are, strictly speaking, turn-related. To do so, we have assessed the sentence environment of each hit. For example, we have discarded those «affective turn» hits that refer to different forms of the verb «to affect» in the ordinary sense of producing an effect or change. Likewise, we have casted aside virtually all the «sens» hits because they mostly refer to expressions such as «in this sense» or «in a sense». Having cleaned the data, the next phase we have carried out consists of reading through the titles, abstracts and keywords of the retrieved articles with a view to selecting those that deal with those specific turns that are addressed in this special issue: the archival, digital, narrative, auto/biographical, and spatial turns. This action has permitted us, first, to narrow down the vast topic of our special issue, and second, to be able to offer a methodological dialogue between those articles retrieved by Hecumen and the contributions to this special issue. This focus has reduced our dataset to 46 articles. The following review comments on a selection of these.

#### 4. A short turn-related qualitative overview of History of Women's Education putting into play Hecumen's results

As indicated in Table 2, Hecumen retrieved a total number of 42 archival turn-related hits. As commented in the Introduction to this special issue, the archival turn threads through Maria Tamboukou's and Maria Teresa Santos Cunhas'

contributions. Understanding the archive as a subject of inquiry, both in terms of curating documentation and retrieving information, is indeed present in numerous articles retrieved by Hecumen. A commented selection illustrates the specific ways in which, the «taxonomies in the making» of the archive highlighted by Ann Stoler (Stoler, 2002, p. 91), have written out marginalised subjects from history. Thus, for example, in their article «Historical child sexual abuse in England and Wales: The role of historians», Adrian Bingham, Lucy Delap, Louise Jackson and Louise Settle set to chart social, legal and political responses to child sexual abuse in the context of «education policy, including regulatory procedures for teachers in state and fee-paying schools» in England and Wales in the 1920s and 1950s. To do so, the authors unpack the gaps and silences present in the archive, in relation not only «to the voices and experiences of victims and survivors themselves» but also to «[t]he etymological problem of searching for child sexual abuse in the historical archive [...] given that the term itself is a relatively recent one» (Bingham, Delap, Jackson and Settle, 2002, p. 3). This methodological reflection is accompanied by an ethical dilemma «relating to the naming or anonymising of those accused and convicted (as well as victims and survivors) in the writing up of research findings» (Bingham, Delap, Jackson and Settle, 2002, p. 1).

In her article discussed above, Gleadle reminds us that «[I]earning to read male-dominated archives creatively has always been essential to the work of feminist historians» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 530). Writing in the early 2010s, she adds that «[t]he most startling change in the discipline since 2001 is the dizzying (albeit variable) availability of digital resources» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 530). According to this author, this digital availability of sources is urging scholars to assess «the methodological implications of digitisation» (Gleadle, 2013, p. 530). This task is precisely what Josephine May takes on in her article «Revisiting the life of Lucy Garvin, first principal of Sydney Girls High School: expanded biography and use of digital sources». Imbricating the archival, digital and biographical turns, May's work seeks to «fill in some of the gaps in the biography of Lucy Arabella Stocks Garvin (1851–1938), first principal of Sydney Girls High School» (May, 2021, p. 287). She does so, firstly, by «us[ing] traditional historical methods in the digital sources to provide an expanded biography of Lucy Garvin» and, secondly, by teasing out «the transformative work of digital sources on the historian's research processes that in turn generate possibilities for expanded biographical studies in the history of education» (May, 2021, p. 287). This twofold methodological approach provides her with two research outcomes: first, to «address important gaps in her life story that challenge current historiographical understandings about her: for example, regarding her initial travel to Australia; her previous career as a teacher in Australia and the circumstances of her appointment as principal; her private and family life; and her involvement in extra school activities»; second, as a result of her «reflexive investigation of the effects of digitisation of sources on the historian's research processes», to claim that «such sources transform the research process by speeding up and de-situating the collection and selection of evidence, while at the same time expanding and slowing the scrutiny of evidence» (May, 2021, p. 287). The author concludes that «[t]he ever-expanding array of digital sources, despite its patchiness, can lead to

finer grained expanded biographical studies while increasing the provisionality of historical accounts» (May, 2021, p. 287).

The narrative and auto/biographical turns are also among those that have most pre-eminence in Hecumen. In his contribution to this special issue, Loïc Szerdahelyi explores the extent to which biographical approaches that examine the history of Physical Education (PE) teachers in France through the prism of gender permits, on the one hand, unpacking the historiographical filiations of the history of female PE teachers; and on the other hand, teasing out the theoretical and methodological shifts these biographical approaches have brought to the general theme of biographies of French PE teachers. In their Hecumen-retrieved article «Educating girls based on the biographies of illustrious women from Spanish history (1900–1960)», Esther Jiménez Pablo and Gemma Muñoz García study the way in which the biographies of famous figures from Spanish history that primary and secondary school students had to study between 1900 and 1960 across the national territory served to promote a patriotic identity among schoolchildren. Jiménez Pablo and Muñoz García pinpoint the only two female authors included in these textbook – Isabella I of Castile and Teresa of Ávila – and state that they served as exceptional public figures that counterposed yet complemented the domestic and pious femininity schoolgirls were to imitate (Jiménez Pablo & Muñoz García, 2021).

As explained in the introduction to this special issue, in their contribution, Victoria Robles and Carme Agulló examine how autobiographical documents, which articulate subjective experiences of the world, can nuance official discourses, and hence put into question historiographical metanarratives about Spanish female educators during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship (1923-1930). In dialogue with the auto/biographical and archival turns, Maria Tamboukou focuses on how letters permit understanding women's epistemological and intellectual involvement in the making of scientific knowledge in the wider cultural formations of European modernity. Coining her notion of «epistolary sensibility», Tamboukou deploys an epistemological approach to archival research that provides her with a methodological framework to study women mathematicians' letters.

In our keyword search, Hecumen has retrieved numerous articles on letters. By way of example, in her article «Epistolary and emotional education: The letters of an Irish father to his daughter, 1747-1752», Willemijn Ruberg explores, in dialogue with the emotional turn, how the correspondence Bishop Edward Synge (1691-1762) exchanged with his daughter Alicia (1733-1807) were used not only to teach her teenage girl how to spell and write letters but also to instruct her in emotional behaviour (Ruberg, 2008). The author claims that the latter took the form of self-restraint as articulated within the eighteenth-century ideal of politeness. This epistolary emotional education is contrasted to the letters Lord Chesterfield (1694-1773) wrote to his son. Ruberg states that these two correspondences show a tension between the ideal of politeness and the way polite behaviour can compromise sincerity. Chesterfield instructed his son to dissimulate, to hide his true emotions. Synge tried to find a balance between polite manners and sincerity, but wrote that, if necessary, custom might prevail over sincerity. On that account, Ruberg suggests that the Synge correspondence belonged to an older emotional culture, in which polite self-restraint was of utmost importance, and that a few decades later,

the cult of sensibility was to become popular, in which the expression of emotions would be encouraged.

Writing on a century later, in her article «Barbara Bodichon's travel writing: Her epistolary articulation of Bildung», Meritxell Simon-Martin conceptualises correspondence as Bildung-like instruments (Simon-Martin, 2016). Taking English painter Barbara Bodichon's travel letters as case study, the author argues that, conforming to Bildung's idea of forging one's individuality in interaction with the world, her travelling provided her with a variety of settings through which she extended towards the unknown and incorporated it into her sense of being. In turn, letters functioned as forums where she made sense of encountering the difference through which she individualised her subjectivity. Notwithstanding, a revised reading of Bildung permits the author to tease out the extent to which Bodichon's self-cultivation was developed at the expense of certain social categories.

As indicated in Table 2, Hecumen has retrieved the keyword «memoir» 3 times. One of these articles, «Emotional regulation and middle-class Irish education: a case study of nineteenth century Catholic convent schools», engages with both the auto/biographical and emotional turns (Hatfield, 2022). In her text, Mary Hatfield puts into play Barbara H. Rosenwein's concept of emotional communities (Rosenwein, 2007) in order to explore how historians might better account for the emotional component of education in Ireland. Using the Irish convent boarding school as a case study, the author analyses a combination of manuscripts: records of disciplinary techniques, teacher-training manuals, and personal memoirs. This combination permits her to tease out the kinds of socialisation and regulation of emotion maintained within the convent community. The author concludes that Irish girls were taught to channel, restrain, and develop a mature emotional life. This examination of «emotional» education suggests an alternative historical reading of the female «accomplishments» or politesse considered so emblematic of the lampooned convent school girl. Ultimately, in Hatfield's text, historical analysis of the emotional component of education provides new insight into the socialisation of class and gender in the religious milieu of an Irish boarding school.

Diaries are also manuscripts historians of women's education examine in their research. Hecumen retrieves 22 hits, including the article «Female writings in a nineteenth century house: Memories about viscondess of Arcozelo's diary», by Maria Celi Chaves Vasconcelos (Chaves Vasconcelos, 2020; translation is ours). In her article, the author crosslinks two types of manuscripts: the viscountess of Arcozelo's diary and contemporary press. This combination of primary sources permits her to understand how the viscountess managed her properties and her belongings beyond what was expected from a woman who was raised to fulfil her duties as a wife and mother. Echoing the spatial turn's idea that location conditions identity-formation – which we develop below –, Chaves Vasconcelos suggests that the domestic space of the nineteenth century urban and rural home was a scenario in which agentic female writing sprouted, despite being «usually cloistered in their rooms and aware of the surveillance to which they were subjected, both by men (from fathers, husbands, brothers) and women (mothers, aunts, grandmothers, and other relatives who made up the extensive relatives who lived in the house)» (Chaves Vasconcelos, 2020, p. 4; translation is ours).

In her contribution to this special issue Maria Teresa Santos Cunha combines the archival and auto/biographical turns to explore the way in which autobiographical documents permit understanding how a female teacher in training in the 1960s negotiated gendered normativity throughout her professional life. To do so, Santos Cunha resorts to consulting a *personal* archive. The experience of having access to this non-catalogued documentation permits the author to complement her study of autobiographical manuscripts by examining the way in which anonymised and privately kept records convey historical knowledge about her living historical subject – named in her article under the pseudonym of MR.

The way in which bodies and their communities are affected by the «agency» of material objects is explored by Stephanie Spencer in her Hecumen-retrieved article «Just a book in a library? The Sybil Campbell library collection fostering international friendship amongst graduate women» (Spencer, 2013). In her paper, Spencer explores the affective power of a book collection – the Sybil Campbell Library Collection. In a context of political turmoil, the library was initially established by the British Federation of University Women (BFUW) in the 1920s with a view to fostering international friendship and peace. Originally located in the BFUW's hall of residence for overseas women graduates (Crosby Hall, London), the library was transformed into an archive of women's history and is now held at the University of Winchester Library. As a Special Collection of over 8,000 books (which have to be called up and read under supervision), Spencer explores their physicality and provenance «as a material symbol» (Spencer, 2013, p. 263) of the emotional investment of the BFUW to the promotion of their transnational and cosmopolitan endeavours and hence an instance of the affective power of tangible objects.

Finally, in their contribution to this special issue, Anderson-Faithful and Holloway tease out the way in which space is socially produced, gendered, and constituted through the interaction between the physical and the social. The importance of locality – understood as place and space, physical and symbolic – in processes of power/knowledge production is precisely the focus of attention of two articles retrieved by Hecumen. In «Doing nature' and being a guide: the problem of the town guide in the British Girl Guides Association, 1930–1960», Sian Edwards explores the discursive imbrication between urban and rural spaces in the context of the girls' youth organisation British Girl Guides Association in the 1930s-1960s (Edwards, 2020). Seeking to give response to «a more complex understanding of the relationship between urban and rural, outdoor and indoor spaces, within youth organisations in the 20th century», the author focuses on the «under-explored» question of «the place of urban spaces in Girlguiding» (Edwards, 2020, p. 45). She does so by analysing the British Girls Guides Association's publication, *The Guide and The Guider*, which permits her to unpack the advice given to its urban members. The author argues that «[w]hile rural spaces, and especially the camp, have been conceptualised by scholars as 'extraordinary' spaces», the fact that girls were encouraged «to undertake nature study in their urban locality[,] the organisation stressed the ordinariness of Guiding activity» (Edwards, 2020, p. 45). Ultimately, Edwards concludes her article by stating that «although rural spaces maintained symbolic position in the education and training of the British Girl Guides Association throughout the mid-twentieth century, the use of urban spaces were central in

ensuring that girls embodied Guiding principles on a day-to-day basis» (Edwards, 2020, p. 45).

For his part, in his article «Recreational spaces at the beginning of the 20th century in the Argentine capital. Problems, tensions and struggles over the multiple meanings of sexual difference», Pablo Scharagrodsky examines the way in which recreational places for children in non-schooling settings acted as an arena where the different (educational) agents involved – policy makers, socialists, anarchists, feminists, religious congregations – vehiculated discourses on boys and girls in line with their ideological outlooks (Scharagrodsky, 2013; translation is ours). Hence, as he explains

[f]or some, recreational spaces were developed with the explicit objective of «caring for» and protecting the boys and girls of the most populous urban neighbourhoods against the risks and threats of the street, whose social representation was linked to the physical and moral dangers that the «outside» permanently generated (Scharagrodsky, 2013, p. 33; translation is ours).

Other educational agents, «dissatisfied with the way the pedagogical subject was conceived within the public educational system», claimed recreational spaces as an alternative to what and how children were taught in formal schooling, «reconfiguring [hence] new meanings about the governance of childhood» (Scharagrodsky, 2013, p. 33; translation is ours). For other actors, recreational spaces were argued for in terms of «resolv[ing] certain social demands about where to leave their children during work time», while for others they became a platform «to combat the secular, atheist and anticlerical discourse of certain social sectors and to bring the child closer to religious doctrine and the word of God» (Scharagrodsky, 2013, p. 33; translation is ours). Finally, some educational agents involved in these debates supported recreational spaces as «the product of social struggles and achievements», that is, within social demands such as the gradual reduction of the working day and new leisure places for the general population. Ultimately, these contentious discourses on the need for recreational spaces for boys and girls vehiculated their own understandings of «sexual difference, pleasure, femininity and masculinity» (Scharagrodsky, 2013, p. 33; translation is ours).

## 5. Concluding remarks

As Gleadle claims in her introduction to her *Women's History Review* special issue,

[t]he imagined communities of feminist historians are richly layered and complex. As the 'molecules' within it, the individual members are highly mobile entities. This creates an eclectic field (Gleadle, 2013, p. 527).

On that account, her rhizomatic cartography of the «molecular» calls for a reconceptualization of

the multiple communities of which we are variously a part, asserting that our shifting and varied alliances can be a source of strength and not division. Thus, our community is composed of multiple, sometimes conflicting strands yet it simultaneously derives its creative impulses from these very differences (Gleadle, 2013, p. 527).

For her, despite these «shifting and varied alliances», this «molecular» masse forms an «epistemic community»:

a community which recognises the plurality of voices within it, but coheres around a central set of emancipatory values. The imagined communities of women's history are, therefore, multi-centred – acentred even: sharing a key vision to establish the study of women as equal historical actors, but comprising a mosaic of intersecting currents. As a result, it grows unevenly in a multitude of directions (Gleadle, 2013, p. 528).

The members of these «layered», «complex» and «multicentred – acentred» imagined communities of Women's and Gender History discussed in this article illustrate Gleadle's molecular cartography as well as its «turns and twists», pinpointed by Anderson-Faithful and Goodman. Their intellectual dialogues with some of the theoretical turns that have characterised the Humanities and Social Sciences give evidence of the «plurality of voices» that form this «eclectic field», with its «multiple, sometimes conflicting strands» that, notwithstanding, shape «a mosaic of intersecting currents».

The plurality of voices within the community is here reflected, for example, in the combination of dialogues with turns the authors engage with. Most develop their study within a single turn: Bingham, Delap, Jackson, Settle in the archival turn; Ruberg, Hatfield, Vasconcelos, Robles and Agulló, and Simon-Martin in the auto/biographical turn; Szerdahelyi, and Jiménez Pablo and Muñoz García in the biographical turn; and Anderson-Faithful and Holloway, Edwards, and Scharagrodsky in the spatial turn. Others opt for situating their research at the crossroads of several turns: May at the crossroads of the archival and digital turns; Tamboukou and Santos Cunha at the crossroads of the archival and auto/biographical turns; and Spencer at the crossroads of the material and archival turn.

Within this plurality of theoretical engagements, the emotional, material, and spatial turns articles are testimony to «intersecting currents». It is the case of Ruberg and Hatfield, who both tease out the notion of «emotional education». Ruberg unpacks the gendered educational underpinnings of epistolary exchanges between father and children in 18<sup>th</sup> century Ireland. His dialogue with the emotional turn permits her not only to pinpoint the gendered epistolary educational input offered to daughter and son but also to nuance the 18<sup>th</sup> century ideal of politeness in its self-restraint and sensibility dimensions. Also contributing to the emotional turn but writing about 19<sup>th</sup> century Ireland, Hatfield opts for combining the analysis of three types of manuscripts: records of disciplinary techniques, teacher-training manuals, and personal memoirs. Her threefold analysis of emotional education in convent boarding schools permits the author to tease out the kinds of socialisation

and behavioural regulation maintained within the convent community, where girls were taught to channel, restrain, and develop a form of mature emotional life that nuances scholarship understandings of female «accomplishments» and politesse as promoted in these educational institutions.

The spatial turn is also approached from a similar angle both by contributors to this special issue and by Hecumen-retrieved authors. Anderson-Faithful and Holloway engage with the spatial turn by examining the extent to which space is socially produced, gendered, and constituted through the interaction between the physical and the social. They do so by analysing three historical case studies through the lenses of Henri Lefebvre, Linda McDowell and Doreen Massey's theoretical projects on place and space. Like Anderson-Faithful and Holloway, Edwards and Scharagrodsky highlight the importance of locality – understood as place and space, physical and symbolic – in processes of power/knowledge production. The former does so by opting for focusing on the relationship between urban and rural, outdoor, and indoor spaces in the context of 20<sup>th</sup> century British girls' organisations. The latter does so by teasing out the sexual difference underpinnings of non-schooling recreational spaces for children in early 20<sup>th</sup> century Argentina, which acted as a physical place and a symbolic space where policy makers, socialists, anarchists, feminists, and religious congregations projected their ideological understandings of childhood governance. For her part, writing within the auto/biographical turn, Vasconcelos engages with the spatial turn by means of a crisscrossed analysis of the diary of 19<sup>th</sup> century Brazilian Viscountess of Arcozel and contemporary press. Vasconcelos suggests that her autobiographical writing attests to the urban and domestic space being a scenario where female agency was articulated. For her diary reveals the extent to which Viscountess of Arcozel succeeded in managing her state as a woman beyond society's expectations.

Other pieces of research discussed in this article present differing approaches to the same turns. Hence, for instance, in dialogue with the archival and digital turns, Bingham, Delap, Jackson and Settle on the one hand, and May on the other, unpack the way the archive hides silences that have written out marginalised subjects from history – by veiling or wiping out their voices from the documentation. Still, while May rejoices in the potential of the increasingly availability of digital sources, Bingham, Delap, Jackson, and Settle warn us of the difficulty of unveiling the voices and experiences of historical subjects owing to the potential anachronism of etymological terminologies present in the archive.

Likewise, the auto/biographical turn also presents distinct approaches among authors. May's engagement with the archival and digital turn permits her to fill in biographical gaps about her historical subject and to offer a critical understanding of it. Like her, Szerdahelyi, Robles and Agulló, and Tamboukou write within an auto/biographical turn that permit them not only to nuance hitherto understandings of their historical subjects but also to provide an epistemological, methodological and historiographical contribution to the field: Szerdahelyi does so by teasing out the shifts within biographies of French PE teachers; Robles and Agulló by putting into question historiographical metanarratives about Spanish female educators during Primo de Rivera's dictatorship; and Tamboukou by providing a theoretical approach around the notion of «epistolary sensibility». Like Tamboukou, taking mid-



Victorian English painter Barbara Bodichon's travel letters as case study, Hecumen-retrieved author Simon-Martin contributes to the auto/biographical turn by offering a conceptualisation of correspondence as Bildung-like instruments. Whereas all these authors underscore the potential of auto/biographies, Jiménez Pablo and Muñoz García approach the biographical turn by unpacking the extent to which biographies written by other scholars – i.e., as published in history textbooks in Spain between 1900 and 1960 – not only wrote female historical figures out but also conveyed a gendered patriotic ideology.

As this brief qualitative turn-related historiographical review illustrates, Hecumen facilitates the comparative examination of the «eclectic field» of Women's History of Education. Ultimately, the outcome of these «shifting and varied alliances» are testimony to the sort of «source of strength and not division» highlighted by Gleadle. For not only they overlap, complement and problematise feminist scholarship but also enhance the «emancipatory values» they promote. As this article has introductorily illustrate, Hecumen is a field-specific database that facilitates unveiling the «creative impulses» that characterize feminist history. We invite scholars to further explore the opportunities it offers to facilitate and boost History of (Women's) Education.

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