Ad maiorem gloriam . . . feminae:
Enlightened Women and the Introduction of Models in Portugal During the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century

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This paper, which derives from an ongoing research project on Enlightened Portuguese women of the eighteenth century and reflects the results so far obtained, is not to be regarded as conclusive. Our purpose is to offer some comments on the relevance of the subject and the aims envisaged in the project and how it can be focused, indicating some methodological tools that might help us to understand it better. On the basis of the data currently available, we propose some lines of research for a subject we consider of particular interest, and which has hitherto received very little attention.

There are many ways in which the Enlightenment can be approached. We are, however, particularly interested in considering it as a repertorial combination of norms and models of a cultural, political, social and economic nature, providing a means for understanding the world and how to act in it. This is what Even-Zohar has called ‘active and passive tools’. While presentation of a universally applicable reform programme was common to the Enlightenment project, this did not imply a homogeneous corpus but rather a complex and contradictory one, whose formulation and use was linked to the interests of the groups and agents involved. This resulted in equally various ways of channelling the programme according to the objectives of the agents concerned and the possibilities open to them.


The introduction of a new repertorial programme for a group or community always implies transgression. Raphael Bluteau’s famous Dicionário, compiled not long before the Portuguese Enlightenment, defines ‘to transgress’ as ‘Passar além/Transgredir húa ley, hum mandamento, etc.; não observar, quebrar, violar’. Bluteau comments: ‘Não acho em autores clássicos exemplos de Transgredi neste sentido’. The reason it would be difficult to find such examples is that for Bluteau ‘classical author’ means ‘autor de bom nome, boa nota’ (i, 278). Only towards the end of the seventeenth century did the word ‘transgredir’ come to mean ‘going beyond the established norms’. As for the corresponding noun, ‘transgression’, Bluteau defines it as: ‘acção de transgredir, no sentido moral’. Years later, in the revised Diccionario da lingua portugueza, published during the most active years of the Portuguese Enlightenment, we find the definition of ‘transgredir’: ‘Passar fóra dos termos, metas ou balizas’; ‘transgredir as leis: estar contra elas’. There are clearly shades and nuances that cannot be ignored. The Jesuit Bluteau sees transgression as meaning breaking or violation. Sixty years later the reviser, Moraes Silva, a fugitive from the Inquisition who had sought refuge in Paris and England, takes up the meaning of ‘transgression’ as ‘going beyond limits’ (and not only physical limits), but does not introduce any moral judgement on this act.

The words used to characterize a phenomenon, their meanings and those who use them, are revealing. In the case under consideration the meaning that came to predominate in the European world suggested ‘an advance, a progress’. This is not a lexical-semantic game, nor is resorting to auctoritates in order to impose a particular viewpoint. On the contrary, we are referring to various conceptions of transgression in the eighteenth century, both immediately before and at the height of the Enlightenment, in order to highlight the viewpoint we consider appropriate for the analysis and understanding of our research project. We are not interested in limiting ourselves to seeing transgression as a sin against the dominating religion and morality (if this were the case we would of course take this into account). Nor do we want to limit ourselves to the personal transgression of the individualist romantic myth (one of many of this kind) elevated to a substantive category as a rupture that only finds its logic in individual practice and is abandoned when there is any risk of collective action, since the individual seeks separateness rather than sharing. What

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4 António de Moraes Silva, Diccionario da lingua portuguez/composto pelo Padre Rafael Bluteau; reformado, e accrescentado por António de Moraes [sic] Silva (Lisbon: Officina de Simão Thaddeo Ferreira, 1789), p. 482.
interests us is programmatic transgression, which aims to go beyond the
dominance of established rules in the field considered (scientific, academic
or literary). This does not imply that all transgression is prompted by
peripheral elements; on many occasions it is the same dominating class or
group that promotes it.

The possibility that transgression will be accepted varies according to
the capacity of those who propose it to impose their principles on the
group or community in which they operate. For example, innovations in
ways of dressing, composing a text in aesthetic terms, or regulating com-
mercial life or judicial processes in particular will be more successful if
they are promoted by an absolute monarch than by the companion of a
marchioness. By virtue of their position monarchs will naturally have a
greater capacity to shape the proposed innovations than their subjects and
may even violate the new codes they have helped to establish if this suits
them. This means that the possibility of success or failure for a particular
transgression is basically related to the positions and functions of their
promoters at the time. This elicits two considerations. The first relates to
the repertoire as a complex and hierarchical group of norms and models,
some central and others peripheral; some dominant and others domi-
nated, in which not all are practicable at the same level and by all those
involved. The second relates to the strategies involved, the activities
required to achieve objectives on the part of those aiming to safeguard
and/or modify the prevailing norms and models.

In the case in question, the activities of Enlightened women for the
introduction of new models in Portugal in the second half of the eigh-
teenth century can be seen as a cultural action (the adjective ‘cultural’ is
not included in the dictionaries mentioned above but the noun was under-
stood as ‘instruction’ by Moraes Silva, replacing Bluteau’s concept of
‘cultivation of belles-lettres’, a term that better defines the repertorial
group of the time we are referring to. In this regard, a number of observa-
tions must be made since they justify the selection of subjects for our
study.

Firstly, it should be noted that the Enlightenment programme led to the
opening of ‘a space of possibilities’ inaccessible to women up to that
time. In other words, this programme meant that women (in fact only
certain women belonging to a particular class and with a position in
society) could become the subject of programmatic action more actively
present in quantitative and qualitative terms rather than, as was the case
up to then — with possible exceptions — simply the beneficiary or, as

5 For the notion of imposing principles of vision and division as legitimate, see Pierre
Bourdieu, ‘Le champ littéraire’, Actes de la Recherche dans Sciences Sociales, 89 (1991),
pp. 3–46.
6 See Bourdieu.
was mostly the case, the passive object of masculine programmes of this nature.

Secondly, a space of possibilities does not necessarily mean a space of probabilities. The Enlightenment held various views on women and their capacities (as the conflicting ideas of Feijó and Rousseau, for instance, serve to exemplify), from which one could deduce their possibilities. According to Rousseau,

Les femmes en général, n’aiment aucun art, ne se connaissent à aucun, et n’ont aucun génie. Elles peuvent réussir aux petits ouvrages qui ne demandent que de la légèreté d’esprit, du goût, de la grâce, quelquefois même de la philosophie et du raisonnement. Elles peuvent acquérir de la science, de l’érudition, des talents, et tout ce que s’acquiert à force de travail. Mais ce feu céleste qui échauffe et embrasse l’âme, ce génie qui consume et dévore, cette brûlante éloquence, ces transports sublimes qui portent leurs ravissments jusqu’au fond des coeurs, manqueront toujours aux écrits des femmes; ils sont tous froids et jolis comme elles.

This was, in fact, one of the most polemic issues of the time. In the society in which women moved their power to act was even further restricted by the fact that domestic and private places for action were more plausible than public platforms and debate. In the Portuguese case, for educational purposes the norms that tended to dominate were those at the service of a supposed bourgeois family stability, like those formulated by Verney, who postulated the need to educate women as the mothers and educators of future men, and as bourgeois housewives who needed mathematics in order to learn to economize on household expenses. More egalitarian proposals were thus relegated to a subsidiary position.

The very *habitus* of women subject to this space of possibilities places them in a position that is clearly disadvantageous in relation to their male homologues, both in terms of their symbolic and cultural capital and also, in many cases, in economic terms (even though women were the

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‘economists’ responsible for the family goods). We should also bear in mind a particularly important restriction: women were prohibited from occupying public positions and could not even act as agents for the institutional dimension of culture.

From these points of view Enlightened feminine cultural activity (that is, among the bourgeoisie and nobility) reflects various degrees and categories of transgression. To practice culture outside the limits of the dominant norm considered appropriate for a woman is already a transgression, which is aggravated if it ‘goes beyond’ what the innovating homologous males are willing to accept; and can even be seen by them as a threat. In this sense, many Enlightened men felt that the Enlightenment construct of women was itself a transgression, particularly since it could lead to competition for spaces, positions and even functions. A paradigmatic example in the French system is provided by the case of Olympe de Gouges, who was guillotined for conspiracy on 3 November 1793, a crime based on the fact that in her writings she defended the view that the Revolution should take into account equality between men and women. The day after the execution, Chaumette, a journalist on *Le Moniteur*, warned readers to remember Olympe de Gouges, the first woman to establish women’s associations, who abandoned her housewifely duties to meddle in the Republic and whose head rolled under the avenging blade of the law. On 19 November, *Le Moniteur* published an anonymous warning to French women stating that Olympe de Gouges had wanted to be a ‘statesman’ and that the law seems to have punished that conspirator for having ‘forgotten’ the virtues appropriate to her sex. Olympe de Gouges, following the internal logic of the new dominant repertoire (which banned any aprioristic inequality between people), went too far for those responsible for that same repertoire.

It should be noted that we have called this paper *Ad maiorem gloriam . . . feminae*, using the play on words as a dialectical proposal on the motto of a dominant repertoire not only in religious but also social terms.

10 This concept, widely used by Pierre Bourdieu, *La distinction* (Paris: Minuit, 1979), is defined as a combination of a structuring structure, organizing practices and the perception of practices; it is a structuring structure in which the principle of the social world is also a product of the incorporation of the division of social classes. The habitus is therefore a system of schemes for generating practices that systematically express the needs and liberties inherent to the class and the constitutive difference in position. The habitus shows the differences in condition, which are retained in the form of differences between class-specific and class-determining practices (as products of the habitus), according to principles of differentiation which because these in turn are a product of these differences, are objectively attributed to these and tend to be perceived as natural.


The phrase is an allusion to the power of the Jesuits, who were expelled from Portugal by the Marquês de Pombal in 1759, but it also refers to the Tridentine Catholic sentiment that dominated Portuguese social life at the time. We must remember that the Virgin was the social model imposed on women in contemporary European society, which was basically a Catholic society. Together with a wide array of female saints, virgins and Catholic martyrs, she was the model of what were considered the three main womanly virtues: chastity, silence and modesty, at a time when, from a theological point of view, ontological equality between men and women was strongly disputed. This means that the introduction of the Enlightenment programme — in which, regardless of the type of belief or non-belief involved, opposition to superstition and irrationality was common — made it possible for some women and men to use the opportunity to replace the intellectual suppression of women by a form of education that would enable them to break their silence. And for some men, and particularly some women, to work ‘ad maiorem gloriam’ not only of women as a gender but also with a view to revising the perception of feminine values.

We are talking of the introduction and creation of repertoires, many of whose models and norms were the result of importing other systems into the Portuguese cultural system, which was in a peripheral position in relation to other systems in respect of new repertoires. A significant component was the reutilization of existing models and norms in this target system and in some cases, their (re-)elaboration. We are also talking of a period of marked change among the elites which was to foster much of the change that was to take place in the last two centuries in the social, cultural and educational sphere, although its conceptual and social broadening could be explicitly denied by the creators of that repertoire.

13 Feijó, in ‘Defensa de las mugeres’, writes ‘Del mismo error physico, que condena à la mujer por animal imperfecto, naciò otro error theologico impugnado por San Agustin, lib. 22. de Civit. Dei, cap. 17, cuyos Autores decian, que en la Resurreccion Universal esta obra imperfecta se ha de perfeccionar, passando las mugeres al sexo varonil’.
14 Leonor de Almeida in a letter to her father written from Chelas and quoted in Marquesa de Alorna, Poesias, ed. by Hernani Cidade (Lisbon: Livraria Sá da Costa, 1941), p. xix, comments on a discussion with her confessor: ‘Em matéria científica, vale mais o dito dum sábio herege do que o dum santo ignorante’. The laicization of knowledge that came with the Enlightenment paved the way for the opening up of new positions and functions for certain women and, in general, for consideration of the feminine condition.

This engagement with the making of repertoire was launched in the context of an attempt made by the makers of these repertoires to break off from some contemporary circumstances and create new living conditions for the group of people they considered to be a legitimate target for these repertoires, thereby in fact either aspiring at, or in reality creating a new group for that repertoire.
These changes ranged from laicism to the concept of universal compulsory education, which became a concern of the state after the Enlightenment. This means that we must focus on the factors responsible for elaboration and transmission, for mediation as understood in this context (rather than on the re-producers). We must put into perspective the productions of these producers and re-producers, either as a result of the mediating action of others or, an aspect of even greater relevance, as part of the mediating and programmatic strategy of their creators; we must also highlight the fact that, given the sensationalist visibility resulting from a Romantic world vision, in cases like this we must turn to an often invisible mediation. From an epistemological viewpoint, by following the activities of Enlightened women we are able to examine the social space and fields in which they acted as well as their evolution and heterogeneous character. The principles defended by each of the three women we have mainly used as examples — Teresa Margarida da Silva e Orta, Teresa de Mello Breyner and Leonor de Almeida, better known as the Marquesa de Alorna — will also shed light on the class objectives and positions pursued by each and by the groups with which they were associated.

When we talk of Enlightened women in Portugal, we are really talking of noblewomen or women accorded noble treatment, the latter from a bourgeoisie seeking to buy or have access through marriage to titles that could safeguard their socio-economic position, as in the well-known case of Teresa Margarida. Others, such as Teresa de Mello Breyner, the Marquesa de Alorna (or the Viscondessa de Balsemão) already belonged to the high nobility. Since their education could not be conducted through centres of higher learning (the first woman to study at Coimbra University was admitted in 1891), the preferred space for study was in the home, the convent or the salon, depending on the particular case. The educational agents were men, who provided resources and educational materials. Significant differences should be noted, however: while this could well have been the case with Teresa Margarida at the end of the first half of the eighteenth century, the Marquesa de Alorna indicates that Teresa de Mello Breyner, who refers in her letters to ‘her pupils’, was her teacher in the convent of Chelas and even later. The Marquesa herself played a significant educational role for many women, as well as men, beginning with her daughters. This reveals the existence of a configurative network

16 At present the Galabra Group is working on the unpublished correspondence of Teresa de Mello Breyner with the Marquesa de Alorna and others. The results will be published on completion of our analysis.

17 This can be verified, for example, in the poem ‘A Tirce’, in Marquesa de Alorna, Obras poéticas de D. Leonor d’Almeida Portugal Lorena e Almeida, marquesa d’Alorna, condessa d’Assumar e d’Oenhausen, conhecida pelo nome de Alcipe, 6 vols (Lisbon: Nacional, 1844), 1, 207. The Arcadian name of Teresa de Mello Breyner was used in correspondence with her.
of her own. In some cases, going abroad was a way for these women to free themselves from pressures in their own milieu and to gain access to new opportunities for learning. If their class condition can largely explain common ideological principles, especially those relating to the articulated shape and function of the state and its governors, their different educational paths also clarify their divergent views on, for example, religious matters. In any case, their action is part of the invisible process through which they continuously proposed models ranging from ways of constructing their texts to new concepts of society, from opinions on the forms of government to norms of moral conduct, specifically relating to the female sex, ‘ad maiorem mulieris gloriam’. Enlightened women belonging to different periods (Teresa Margarida was born in 1711, Teresa de Mello Breyner in 1739, the Viscondessa de Balsemão and the Marquesa de Alorna in 1749 and 1750 respectively), are all self-proclaimed monarchists, despite other ideological tendencies circulating in Europe (particularly during the period that saw the publication of Mello Breyner’s writings and the activities of the Marquesa de Alorna), which challenged monarchical government in favour of bourgeois democracy. Their assessments differed, however, as a result of their *habitus* and the areas in which they operated at the time. Teresa Margarida, who had neither title nor nobiliary capital, attacked Absolutism head-on, making explicit reference to the government of Dom João. In Mello Breyner’s letters it is the bourgeoisie and the misgovernment of Pombal that are subject to criticism. The Marquesa de Alorna, shut away in a convent from the age of eight until she was twenty-seven, as the daughter of a nobleman accused of conspiracy by the Marquês de Pombal is clearly anti-Napoleonic in her attitude and defends the *ancien régime*. Their particular circumstances reflect a class interest and suggest that their views on the participation of the people in government may also derive from their diverse social origins. Teresa Margarida has a concept of the king as father to his vassals, without any discrimination as to nobiliary typology. Mello Breyner, taking a more despotic line, discounts the value of the people and defends the privileges of the aristocracy as members of the Royal Council. For her ‘aristocracy’ meant the traditional Portuguese aristocracy, since she despised the new nobility created during the reign of D. José I, which came from the merchant bourgeoisie. Like most of the high Portuguese aristocracy of the time, she places all her hopes on the reign of Dona Maria. However, both Mello Breyner and Teresa Margarida intervened in politics through the use of transgressive repertoires. The case of the Marquesa de Alorna is different and clearly exemplifies of the defence of class positions. During her confinement in the convent of Chelas she held anti-despotic opinions but later became a firm defender of the throne and the altar, particularly after her experience of
the French Revolution (she sheltered French refugees in her house in Lisbon), and Napoleon’s ambitions.\textsuperscript{18}

Their activities and their writings reveal that these women were fully aware of dominance and class. If class awareness leads them to take up positions in defence of the group they belong to, their awareness of dominance, which affected them only in their condition as women, was expressed in more complex ways. These converged in their preference for making themselves invisible without relinquishing show and self-display, a conduct which seems paradoxical only in appearance. The use of a pseudonym in the case of Teresa Margarida, or anonymity in the case of Mello Breyner, is not too distant from Alorna’s resort to her ‘poor feminine condition’, both in her letters to her father and in some of her other relationships. This is in striking contrast to the vigour and firmness of her actions in many other cases, revealing the different tactics used in her social behaviour. The calculated nature of these various devices is clearly evident.

In their writings (Teresa de Mello Breyner in her letters; Teresa Margarida da Silva e Orta in her \textit{Máximas de Virtude e Formosura}; and Leonor de Almeida in her correspondence with her father and in her poetry) all these women make it clear that their option is discretion or \textit{false} modesty. As women who would be judged harshly, in any public intervention or whenever they displayed their knowledge openly, they chose to maintain the forms of decorum and to assume certain commonplaces about women, even though they referred to them with irony, sorrow or vanity, depending on the case. Mello Breyner, for instance, talks about the great merit of her work considering that it comes from a woman’s hand. They do this even though these commonplaces are denied in their productions, as in \textit{Osmia}. All three of them, faced with coercion resulting from the concept of modesty and silence as feminine virtues, transgress the norm by not displaying those virtues. Nevertheless, and once more not paradoxically, they shelter behind those same virtues in order to avoid the consequences of transgression. The Marquesa de Alorna, for example, after rebutting her father’s view that Voltaire’s works should be consigned to the bonfire (‘De que servem homens queimados, meu querido pai?’), concludes by using God to withdraw legitimacy from her father and transfer it to herself (‘Não é Deus que deve pôr término aos nossos dias?’) stating:

Eu conheço que V. Exª. Tem muita virtude e muito juízo para decidir bem, mas eu, que sou mulher, com o coração muito pequeno, quando se fala em matar, sempre me

\textsuperscript{18} It should be noted that a regression occurred in some cultural spaces as a result of opposition to revolutionary ideas and liberalism in general. This may have led to a retreat from the spaces conquered by women, which challenged norms defining their social role as exclusively dependent on men: as daughters, wives and mothers confined to the domestic sphere.
This means that it was common to their strategies to introduce the new models by reusing, to their own advantage, what the existing norms denied them. This suggests the following hypothesis: given the impossibility of free public intervention, these Enlightened women opted for another type of strategy, for access to new repertoires and for diffusion of these. It can be deduced from this hypothesis that this strategy was suggested because their own interests were focused on the introduction and propagation of models rather than on the achievement of individual or collective goals (as precursors). It also derived from an elitist and aristocratic attitude that probably made them prefer recognition by their small group of peers rather than a great public success. We believe that this lies at the heart of our investigation: the transgression presupposed by the incorporation of new models by Enlightened women represents a complex dialectic between the new repertorial elements and those that were dominant. This dialectic is also the result of the existence of what, in another context and in relation to protosystemic agents, I have called ‘projective deficits’. This concept can equally be applied here. I am using the term to refer to the detection and/or deduction of what these Enlightened women interpreted, implicitly or explicitly, as repertorial shortcomings, and the possible programmatic formulation and/or practice and intervention deriving from these. They are projective deficits in that they indicate a void to be filled (or a presence to be substituted), a project to be carried out, which differs from the various interests, forces and groups involved. In any event, what is evident is the impossibility or inability of agents to fully and systematically apply some of the proposals that form part of their programme of action. This means that some of those programmatic proposals, or that part of the entire repertorial group they wish to promote may be presented and developed in an ambiguous way. They may also deliberately aim to confuse or run the risk of being confused with different or even conflicting formulations by other agents who share...
similar repertoires or even the dominant repertoire that is being challenged. For this reason we must take into account not only their capacity to impose their principles, but also the different strategies and repertorial modifications they may adopt in terms of their own strengths and interests.

Some examples of the re-utilization of dominant repertorial norms with a view to advancing new programmatic elements are given below.

Teresa Margarida’s work on explicit political reform is dedicated to the future queen, Dona Maria. The same reading can be applied to the character of Teresa de Mello Breyner’s Osmia, who is presented as a model for a woman ruler. When Dona Maria came to the throne, Leonor de Almeida, Marquesa de Alorna, was released from prison and her hopes for change rested with the new monarch, with whom she maintained an ongoing relationship. In fact the queen later became the ‘godmother of her marriage’, a godmothership probably engineered by Teresa de Mello Breyner, a woman who had a direct relationship with Dona Maria, and had earlier worked for Leonor’s release from Chelas.  

The desire for direct or indirect support by a monarch, which was a common convention of the time, seems to indicate that this protection was sought to enable these new women to enhance their expectations of carrying out the programmes they defended and increase the possibility that they could put forward political ideas constructing, for example, a model of woman that was very different from that associated with religious tradition.

The very fact of making their ideas public already implies a transgression aggravated by the use of literary genres considered ‘high’ and appropriate to the masculine repertoire, namely romance and tragedy. The transgression that characterizes these women literary producers of the second half of the eighteenth century is evident in their choosing to publish genres that, in principle, could be regarded as inappropriate for women according to the norms prevailing at the time. For example, in the case of Teresa Margarida and Teresa de Mello, instead of writing poetry they wrote romances or tragedies, genres considered by the Enlightenment as ideal for the production and diffusion of models and, therefore, reserved for men as privileged agents of the public field of action.  

These women producers go beyond this invisible but significant limit in the literary system, and although they were known and recognized as producers of poetry, according to the information we have gathered they relegated their poetic compositions to circulation in manuscript and to more or less

22 Alorna, p. xxi.
23 Verney dedicates Letter VII to poetry, coming to conclusions such as: ‘A poezia nam é coiza necessária na República: é facultade arbitraria e de divertimento. E assim, nam avendo necessidade de fazer versos, ou fazélos bem ou nam fazé-los, por nam se expor às rizadas, dos inteligentes’ (1, 274).
private spheres, preferring to publish prose works or tragedies, the genres considered ideal for the introduction of models of an Enlightened character. The risk was reduced by hiding behind an acronym, as in the case of Teresa Margarida, or anonymity, as in the case of Teresa Mello Breyner, in order to escape public exposition and debate to which they could be exposed.

It seems clear in various cases that, in the context of Enlightened associativism, these women actively promoted the creation of platforms for an interchange which was not only literary but scientific and political-cultural, and intended for the promotion and practice of their ideas, many of which were of an institutional character. This is not in itself, perhaps, the most significant fact. What matters is the creation of networks of interactive links between elements sharing common repertoires and relatively different positions in different fields. These networks could be used or activated on specific occasions, with correspondence playing a major role, as a privileged means of communication for channelling projects and exercising influence. It would be worth investigating whether these platforms were catalysts for many men to gain access to other platforms, institutionalized by power or recognized by it, or even whether those men served as vehicles for the ideas promoted by women. One of the best syntheses that offers evidence of this is the commentary by Alexandre Herculano, the intellectual who occupies a central position in Portuguese Romanticism, who wrote in *O Panorama* on the death of the Marquesa de Alorna. Particularly significant is his view of Leonor de Almeida as protector (which reveals her great symbolic power) and inspirer, two functions that kept the Marquesa in the private sphere, the persuasiveness of the Enlightened attitude that she transmitted, and her rich cultural capital. It may be noted that the peripheral character of the Portuguese system is also reflected in Herculano’s invocation of Madame de Staël as the paradigm:

Àquela mulher extraordinária é que eu devi incitamento e proteção literária, quando, ainda no verdor dos anos, dava os primeiros passos na estrada das letras [...] porque o menor vislumbre de engenho, a menor tentativa de arte ou de ciência, achavam nela tal fervor, que ainda o mais apoucados e tímidos se alentavam [...] A sua crítica era modesta e tinha não sei o quê de natural e afectuoso que se recebia com tão bom ânimo como os louvores de que se não mostrava escassa, quando merecidos [...] A sua conversação, variada e instrutiva, era fácil e amena. E, todavia, dos seus contemporâneos, quem conheceu tão bem, não dizemos a literatura grega e romana, em que igualava os melhores, mas a moderna de quais tódas as nações da Europa, no que nenhum dos nossos portugueses a igualou? Como Madame de Staël, ela fazia voltar a atenção da mocidade para a Arte da Alemanha, a qual veio dar vida à Arte meridional [...] Foi por isso e pelo seu profundo engenho, que com sobeja razão se lhe atribuíu o nome de Staël Portuguesa.24

The platforms indicated above include the salon, a fashionable French import which was particularly fulcrual in the case of the Marquesa de Alorna, who had encountered it in her father’s house, and indeed it was in one of her father’s salons that she met her future husband. Even during her confinement in Chelas the Marquesa seems to have contributed to the creation of a stable focus of interchange and mediation, together with an additional educational space for her convent companions. This was also the case with Teresa de Mello Breyner, the accredited promoter and supporter of the foundation of the Academia das Ciências in 1779. Thanks to her efforts, years later the Academia became the ‘Royal’ Academy of Sciences under the protection of the queen, but Mello Breyner’s name does not appear in the list of founders, which is headed by the Duque de Lafões and includes her husband, whose participation seems to have been less important than his wife’s. These two cases show that these women had considerable organizing ability, which others lacked. This way of functioning through men could account for the cover sought by Teresa Margarida da Silva e Orta in Alexandre de Gusmão for the purpose of publishing her work (which later led to it being attributed to him). It could also provide the opportunity for travelling and living in a different milieu, as the Marquesa de Alorna found through her marriage to the Conde de Oeynhausen. It is likely that it was through her influence that her husband was appointed Minister of Portugal in Vienna, which enabled the Marquesa to frequent one of the most active Enlightened courts in the Europe of the time. It was there that she met Marie Theresa and Catherine of Russia. Catherine was the model that Teresa de Mello Breyner in her letters expressly chose for Dona Maria. She also visited other courts of similar interest to her, and her contacts are described in the introduction to the *Obras poeticas*:

O desejo de ver augmentada a fortuna e boa sorte de seu marido fez com que a Condessa viesse a Lisboa, e dahi fosse a Salvaterra, onde estavam Suas Magestades; e em dois meses que alli fez a sua corte, obteve para seu marido a nomeação de Ministro Enviado a Vienna d’Austria, para onde foi necessário que partissem.

In Madrid she was received by Charles III, and in France, she was received by Louis XVI. We are told that:

Travou grande conhecimento com Mr. e Mme. De Necker [parents of the woman who became the famous Madame de Staël], que nesse tempo tinha já credito e influencia, em cuja casa se reuniam os eruditos e os politicos do tempo. Em uma dessas reuniões foi a Condessa convidada para fazer a narração dos acontecimentos daquella epocha importante, o que ella desempenhou de forma que mereceo o maior appaluso.

In Vienna she was received by Marie Theresa and her successor, the emperor Joseph,
Fai lhe presente da insignia e diploma da Ordem da Cruz Estrellada daquele Imperio. Conhece o Principe de Kaunitz, Landgrave de Furstemberg, Mme de Valstein, Madame de Thun; achou aqui o Abbade Pedro Metastasio, Poeta Cesareo da Corte de Carlos 6º e de Maria Teresa, com o qual contrahio as relações de amizade, e as da literatura italiana, que muito lhe aproveitaram nas suas composições as mais harmoniosas.

She returned to Lisbon, and in France nearly four years later, met Delille, ‘auctor do Poema dos Jardins, e das Georgicas Francezas’, to whom the Marquesa makes a warm reference in her ‘Recreações Botanicas’. It may be noted that the semi-clandestine Sociedade da Rosa, inspired by Leonor de Almeida (in which figures such as Bocage participated), with its anti-Napoleonic stance at the beginning of the nineteenth century, had its roots in such contacts, which may have been not wholly unrelated to Freemasonry. These Enlightened women, aware of their projective deficits, in this way reformulated these means of (indirectly) intervening publicly. In this context we should note the expressive words of one of the most influential figures of the French Revolution, Madame Roland, in a letter to Bancal, which reveals an attitude similar to that deduced for the Portuguese cases studied:

I do not think that our present customs allow us to occupy public posts. Our mission is, therefore, to publicize the good and to foster and encourage sentiments useful to the Fatherland, but we should in no way participate in political activities.

The reading and popularization of foreign models also provided important protection for the activities of these women. Teresa Margarida followed one of the models, held in high esteem at the time, Fénélon’s Telemaque (which was explained in one of the two variants of the second edition, published as Aventuras de Diófanes, in 1777), but only in part since it ‘goes beyond’ the Enlightenment repertoire. The numerous translations and imitations (‘free’ or otherwise), produced by the Marquesa de Alorna are also fundamental in introducing new models into the Portuguese cultural system. This activity afforded the opportunity to exhibit their erudition, abilities and skills (knowledge of languages indicated an intellectual range superior to that of those who did not have such knowledge). It was also a fulcrum means of introducing models under the protection of the semi-concealment provided by foreign authorship: by not assuming responsibility for the work while at the same time benefiting

25 Alorna, pp. xxii–xxiii, xxv.
26 Translated from the quotation in Duhet, p. 72.
27 The Marquesa de Alorna’s translation of Wieland’s Oberon by was the result of a wager (with Muller) that she could demonstrate the possibilities and wealth of the Portuguese language. Contemporary writings translated or imitated by Leonor de Almeida include contemporaries, Goldsmith, Pope, Gray, Thomson, Goethe, Buerger, Ossian, Delille, Lamartine and Chateaubriand. In many cases these were used for pedagogical or political purposes.
from the opportunities provided by introducing the text, and even ‘imitating it freely’, a legitimacy concordant with Enlightenment models. They were able to exercise a more effective influence in the milieu to which it was directed. This opens up an important line of research in this area, which will enable us to determine the position and function of these initiatory activities during that epoch. These may have been co-ordinated with intermediation and teaching activities, which were assiduously practised and may have been more central and determining than the ‘Romantic mirage’ has allowed us to see.

Educational activities seem to have played a significant role in the intermediation strategy. This applied not only in the salon or ad hoc programmes of feminine instruction such as those provided in the writings of Teresa Margarida and Teresa de Mello, for instance, which were designed for potential development by D. Maria. The Marquesa de Alorna dedicated much of her activity in Almeirim to promoting the education of girls. According to Hernâni Cidade:

Em Almeirim, onde passa os primeiros anos de viúvez, rodeia-se de crianças — os filhos próprios e alheios. A Epístola a Natércia, lembra a enternecida e lírica obra de educação que ali realizou, promovendo nas raparigas da terra a aprendizagem da leitura e dos lavores, numa alegria animada de cantos, para que ela escrevia a letra. A História Universal é em verso que, na mesma época, a ensina aos filhos-graciosa tentativa pedagógica documentada em manuscrito que compulssei.28

And in the edition of the Marquesa de Alorna’s works sponsored by her daughters we learn that:

Depois que faleceo o Conde d’Oeynhausen passava a Condessa em Almeirim a maior parte do anno, ocupando-se na educação das filhas, e em socorrer os pobres daquelas suas terras, favorecendo-os com todos os meios que estavam ao seu alcance. Entretinha á sua custa uma boa mestra, para que as moças d’Almeirim aprendessem todas a ler, a coser, e os mais lavores proprios do seu sexo. Em um dia de semana juntava em sua casa as outras raparigas, que sabiam só fiar: dava-lhes de comer, e fazia-as trabalhar, pagando-lhes depois a obra que faziam, com o fim de as costumar, e de lhes dar gosto pelo trabalho; e como a Poesia embellezava todos os passos da sua vida, compunha-lhes cantigas com que ellas se entretivessem, e que um pouco lhes desenvolvessem o espírito, na proporção do seu estado. E no mesmo tempo, em beneficio da instrução de suas filhas, compunha em verso umas lições da Historia de Portugal, que seriam mui dignas e proprias de tal objecto, se fossem concluidas e aproveitadas.29

Many of her translations and her ‘Recreações Botânicas’ (‘poema dedicado ás senhoras portuguezas’), which attests to the author’s interest in science, have a pedagogical intent aimed at adult women. Although the three coincided in their elitist concept of education and considered that

28 Hernâni Cidade, p. xxix.
29 Alorna, pp. xxix–xxx.
access to higher education should be for the aristocracy (Mello Breyner, for instance, given her fear of the rise of the bourgeoisie, expressed this view in her letters), this does not mean that they denied the lower classes access to education. This was envisaged in their typically Enlightened rhetoric, which values privileges acquired through merit above those acquired through birth. This rhetoric was applied to educational projects carried out by Mello Breyner in her palace in the Alentejo, where she was responsible for educating both her servants’ children and other children from Estremoz. It was also reflected in Teresa Margarida da Silva e Orta’s *Máximas de Virtude e Formosura* through the dedication of Climenea, Queen of Thebes, to the education of the children of shepherds and the bourgeoisie.

Finally, I would like to mention some future lines of action and research that we regard as central to the analysis of the topics I have been considering. These can be divided into three lines of enquiry: the first is to determine the real repertoires defended by the women of the Portuguese Enlightenment considered in this analysis, both in their own terms and in terms of their relationships with the repertoires and agents active at the time, seeking to establish their subsequent success or failure. Secondly, it is important to distinguish elements of conscious tension from those of symbolic violence in the programming and propagation of these repertoires. In this regard, I believe that the definition and interpretation of the strategies followed and the detection of the projective deficits mentioned above would be of great interest. Thirdly, we consider it fundamental to be able to describe and analyse all the types of networks established or shaped by the women concerned. This research will enable us to offer a reformulation of the prevailing view of the Portuguese Enlightenment in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and finally to establish the position and function of the tasks of elaboration, transmission and projection of models and their agents — in this case women.30

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