

A Public Intellectual in Nineteenth-Century Portugal:

Francisca Wood's editorials

The present article focuses on the journalism of Francisca de Assis Martins Wood in *A Voz Feminina* [*The Female Voice*], and the symbolic significance of having, over a two-year period, a female public intellectual at the helm of a periodical endowed with a distinctively progressive ethos. Launched three years before the famous 1871 Casino Lectures, *A Voz Feminina* marked a turning-point, in terms of a modern conceptualisation of politics and religion – one that has long since, however, become routinely associated with the all-male *Geração de 70* in Portuguese cultural historiography. While unapologetically arguing for the recognition of women as intellectuals, the journal sought to foster debate not only on the controversial issues surrounding women's education and rights, but also on religious, political and ethical questions, including anticlericalism and animal welfare. Although the significance of this intervention has yet to translate into mainstream accounts of the history of ideas in nineteenth-century Portugal, as Francisca Wood put it:

São os séculos e não o *dictum* dos homens que aquilatam a verdade. Tempo virá em que as gentes se assombrem da lide social que se está passando entre os homens e as mulheres; em que se leia como uma das muitas fábulas históricas a crónica das dificuldades escabrosas que as mulheres encontram no século XIX para se fazerem crer entes racionais, inteligentes, cogitadores e capazes de responsabilidade. (n.72: 1)

[It is the centuries, not the *dictum* of men, which measure the truth. A time will come when people will be shocked by the social battle currently going on between men and

women; when the chronicle of the terrible difficulties experienced by nineteenth-century women in trying to be taken as rational, intelligent, thinking beings, capable of responsibility, will be read as a historical fable among many.]

The weekly periodical ran uninterruptedly for two years between January 1868 and December 1869, with a telling change of title to the more explicit *O Progresso* [*Progress*] three quarters of the way through. Wood was sole editor, until her husband, the British William Thorold Wood, came on board eighteen months later with the rebranding as *O Progresso*. Her periodical was the first in Portugal to actively embrace the transnational cause of female suffrage, precisely as it gained momentum (Pazos Alonso 2017a). In this article, our focus is broader, as we explore how she set out to reclaim for women the right to debate on an equal footing with men some of the pressing issues that affected them – and therefore the nation – all the while noting that ‘equal footing’ is a misleading term, since women were not legally equal by any stretch of the imagination.

In fact, the Portuguese Civil Code of 1867 had specifically curtailed the freedom of expression of (married) women, by legislating that they could only publish with their husband's explicit permission. Yet, reading between the lines, if a need to regulate their activity was felt, it was surely an early sign that women had started to make inroads via print culture. The fact that Wood's intervention represented a threat to the established order (Catholic and monarchic) is evidenced by the periodical's mixed reception. While it elicited support from a range of provincial papers (Brito et al, 1986: 55-56), simultaneously *A Voz Feminina* was at the receiving end of a vicious hate campaign in a conservative Lisbon-based paper for almost the entire duration of its lifespan, as we shall see.

In her self-appointed mission of fostering debate, Wood deployed a variety of tactics. In the foregoing analysis, we will examine one recurrent discursive strategy: open letters,

often in the form of petitions, addressed to men in positions of authority. In the first year of the periodical's life, Wood had addressed fellow journalists in her editorials at various junctures. But it is not until the second year that she formally begins to petition men in power.

As Cristo highlights in her study *A epistolaridade nos textos de imprensa de Eça de Queirós*:

‘Um pouco à semelhança do panfleto, a carta aberta toma geralmente uma estrutura argumentativa e um tom persuasivo e o epistológrafo pretende, neste caso, alcançar o seu público, fazendo com que este tome uma decisão, assuma um pensamento, partilhe uma determinada opinião’ (2010: 77).

[A bit like the pamphlet, the open letter generally has an argumentative structure and a tone of persuasion, the writer, in this case, wishing to reach their readers in order for them to take a decision, adopt a position, share a particular opinion]

Wood starts on a relatively modest scale, with a seemingly self-contained and practical issue, by entreating the local authorities in Lisbon to deal with widespread cruelty to animals. Within a matter of weeks, however, two other pieces broaden her scope to increasingly inflammatory issues: the right of women to education and the thorny question of the vote. In so doing, her public interventions, addressed to figureheads endowed with transnational significance at opposite ends of the spectrum - the Pope, Pius IX (1792-1878), and the Spanish Republican leader, Emilio Castelar (1832-1899) - must necessarily be understood as political interventions at a time when women's voices were not easily heard in the public sphere. In our analysis, then, we will consider Wood's choice of interlocutors, mindful that ‘o receptor da carta desempenha uma função vital na estratégia textual, constituindo, com o sujeito da enunciação, o segundo termo interlocutivo’ [the recipient of the letter has a central

function in the textual strategy, holding, after the person who enunciates, the second interlocutory position] (Cristo, 2010: 71).

Cultural Authority: whose prerogative is it to (re)-think the nation?

Print culture is fundamental to an understanding of nineteenth-century Portugal on multiple levels. By the 1860s, the periodical press had become a regular presence in Portuguese middle-class households and its pervasive significance is duly reflected in realist fiction, not least in *O Primo Basílio* [*Cousin Basílio*] (1878), insofar as it framed Eça's famous novel. In the opening chapter Luisa, the main character, is immersed in reading *Diário de Notícias*. In the epilogue, a minor character, [o] Paula is seen reading *A Nação*. Neither choice of titles is innocent: *Diário de Notícias* was a daily whose launch in late 1864 heralded a new era for commercial journalism (Sousa et al, 2014: 105), while *A Nação* was a Catholic and monarchic paper. As such, it provided an easy target for Paula's bitterness against the status quo, which the narrator observes was leading him towards atheism and the Commune, at the time a shorthand for freethinking. *O Primo Basílio*, then, portrayed women as passive consumers of the press, and implied that only men were in a position to react against the ideologically conservative narrative of the nation reproduced through the press. Yet one decade earlier Francisca Wood had already proved herself to be a shining example of a Portuguese woman who drew on her analytical faculties to gesture towards the desirability of structural change.

As a whole, *A Voz Feminina*'s editorials often had an explicitly political tone. In general terms, as Cristo notes, the use of an enthusiastically committed language continued to characterise nineteenth-century journalistic practice through most of the century (2010: 103). While combative papers remained a common paradigm in the 1860s, then, what was highly unusual was the gender of the editor. Given her leadership, it is hardly surprising that one

third of the editorials bear her signature (32 out of 102). This represents nearly 50% of all those that are signed (69 out of 102). However, there are compelling reasons to believe that the total number of editorials penned by Wood was much higher, since in n.35 she declared that all articles published anonymously up to then, were in fact authored by her (n.35: 1). This declaration enables us to ascribe another nineteen editorials to her, thereby raising the proportion of editorials to a whopping 50% of the total (51 out of 102).¹

Her opening editorial for the newly-launched *A Voz Feminina* is upfront about her intention to be involved in the construction of a modern nation:

Bem-vindo sejas ano novo de 1868. Bem-vindo sejas a este pitoresco e lindo Portugal! Muitas outras nações – algumas ricas e extensas – não te podem festejar com aclamações jubilosas, como nós, os pigmeus da Europa (...)

Não te podem, meu ano bom, sorrir como o nosso Portugal, onde pulula o progresso da civilização racional, onde a cultura intelectual de seus jovens filhos começa a luzir com esse brilho deslumbrador. (n.1:4)

[Welcome, New Year 1868. Welcome to this picturesque and beautiful Portugal! Many other nations – some rich and expansive – cannot celebrate you with such jubilant cheers as we, the pygmies of Europe do (...)

They cannot, my dear year, smile like our own dear Portugal, where the progress of rational civilization pulses, where the intellectual culture of its youth begins to shine with such dazzling brilliance]

¹ This estimate errs on the side of caution, as other later unsigned articles may well belong to her as well.

Wood strikes an upbeat tone as she elects to describe, through alliteration, though possibly with more rhetorical flair than accuracy, Portugal as a country ‘onde pulula o progresso’ [where progress pulses], only then turning her attention to her female contemporaries: ‘Mas nós mulheres – quero dizer Ex.mas Senhoras, que fazemos?’ [But we women – I mean, my dear ladies– what are we doing?]. Although women lag behind because they bestow their efforts only on fashion, her tone is one of encouragement, not least as she is careful to include herself in the group. She exhorts her female readership to join the progress of a rational civilization by rejecting their status as mere decorative dolls: ‘Não queiramos por mais tempo ser, o que até agora temos sido – bonecas!’ [Let us no longer be satisfied being that which we have been until now – dolls!]

She deploys the compelling argument that public displays of gallant behaviour on the part of men do not translate into true respect in practice. If as a child, she easily tired of her dolls, casting them away without a second thought, the editorial pursues the analogy to suggest that men are bound to likewise toss away as mere playthings women who do not have the erudition to relate to them. This, of course, is exemplified throughout the fiction of Eça de Queirós, whose portrayal of homosocial bonding repeatedly suggested that intellectual companionship between men was generally more satisfying and intimate than relationships with the opposite sex.

Wood, however, was more optimistic than Eça and goes on to argue that, if the aim of a woman is to earn the lasting interest and respect of a male companion, true learning is a better investment than looks, which inevitably fade over time. In short, it is ultimately in women’s self-interest and self-preservation, she implies, to be something more than superficially attractive dolls, patronized by men. Crucially, in her bid to raise women's aspirations, she makes the point that women do not lack innate ability or intelligence:

Aos atrativos que a natureza nos deu, juntemos a preponderância que dá o saber. Às portuguesas não falta inteligência; falta-lhes o amor do estudo sério, falta-lhes o hábito de análise filosófica, não só sobre assuntos abstratos, mas até sobre os fenómenos mais familiares que nos circundam.

[To the charms which nature bestowed on us, let us add the superiority which knowledge offers. Portuguese women don't lack intelligence; what they lack is a love of serious study, they lack the habit of philosophical analysis, not only in relation to abstract matters, but even in relation to the more familiar phenomena around us.]

A recurrent theme throughout Wood's editorials is that God created men and women as equals but, as she points out here, intellectual faculties need honing. Critical analysis and philosophical enquiry are an acquired habit ('o hábito de análise filosófica'): they require commitment to serious study ('o amor do estudo sério') without which the logical implication is that female intellectual gifts will go to waste.

Wood ends this opening editorial strategically, with a reference to the role that women have in the formation of future generations as mothers:

E isto não é tudo. A influência da mulher pensadora; da mulher que observa, que aprende, que tem substituído, por meio de estudo sério, um discorrer lógico e correto aos raciocínios pueris de crianças; é no seu lar doméstico como o sol na floresta, abrange tudo quanto o rodeia. Ainda mais; estende-se às gerações futuras nos filhos que hão de brotar em homens.

[And that is not all. The influence of the female thinker; of the woman who observes, who learns, who has substituted, through serious study, the puerile reasoning of a child with a logical and sound discourse, in her domestic home, is like the sun in the forest; she reaches all that surrounds her. And there's more; her influence stretches forward to the future generations via her sons who will one day become men]

It was a sure way to unite her readers, given that the role of mothers as educators was one of the strongest arguments for improving women's access to education. A few years later, in an article in *As Farpas* that subsequently became titled as 'As meninas da geração presente em Lisboa', Eça would stress the importance of maternal input through a dictum 'Na criança, como num mármore branco, a mãe grava' (1872: 42) [On her child, as on a blank marble, the mother engraves]. Moreover in the last quarter of the nineteenth century Maria Amália Vaz de Carvalho would become a significant spokesperson for the mission of mothers as educators. Yet, it is worth noting that unlike Eça and the young Vaz de Carvalho, who declined to collaborate in *A Voz Feminina* on the grounds that 'o jornal, enfim, deve ser masculino' [the newspaper should, after all, be masculine] (n.25: 4), Wood refused to abide by prevailing essentialist notions that ultimately continued to relegate women to the domestic sphere. Instead, as a 'mulher pensadora' [thinking woman] Wood's engagement through open letters with key men in positions of authority amply demonstrates her intellectual confidence when in the public arena.

Petitions for the Protection of Animals

To the best of our knowledge, Wood's campaign for animal welfare is the first such sustained intervention to occur in nineteenth-century Portugal.² Her petition 'Apelo: à Ex.ma Câmara

² Another early campaigner, Alice Moderno, was only born in 1867.

Municipal de Lisboa' [Appeal: to the Honourable City Council of Lisbon n. 66]) to improve measures for the protection of animals is the first formal appeal to take place in the periodical, and, as such, provides a stepping-stone for subsequent ones, while modelling debating skills for her readership. Its overture reads:

Meus srs. – V. Ex.as como distintos e dignos constituintes dos senados desta metrópole têm ao seu alvedrio dispensar muito bem, não só a humanidade, mas a todos os viventes que conjuntamente com V. Ex.as respiram as auras na nossa pátria. (...) Meus srs., os cães e os gatos, os cavalos, os bois, os burros, e as galinhas, são criaturas sencientes, que sofrem com a falta de alimento suficiente, com o trabalho excessivo, com o desalinho e inconveniência dos lugares em que os abrigam, e com os desapiedados tratos que recebem dos desalmados que os governam. (n. 66: 1)

[Dear Sirs – My good gentlemen, as distinguished and honourable members of the senate of this metropolis, you have at the disposal of your will, not only humankind, but all living creatures who, alongside you good sirs, breathe the airs of our land. (...) Dear Sirs, dogs and cats, horses, oxen, donkeys and hens, are sentient beings, which suffer with under-feeding, with over-working, with the poor up-keep and inadequacy of their shelter, and with the remorseless treatment that they receive at the hands of the soulless individuals who rule over them.]

From the outset, Wood subtly placed the onus on the moral worthiness of her addressees through the alliterative 'distintos e dignos'. After stressing their standing as official representatives, she appeals to their compassion, emotionally highlighting the ill treatment of

animals through the tricolon ‘com...com...com’. Wood then adduces an argument of a more practical nature, namely that to deal with this wrongdoing would hardly cost any money: ‘Ilustres srs. do município de Lisboa, V. Ex.as PODEM, seguramente sem aumentar o *deficit*, sem mesmo pôr dedo nos fundos do município, obstar a tanto e tão grande penar’ [Noble sirs of the Council of Lisbon, good gentlemen, you CAN, surely without increasing the deficit, without even touching the council funds, prevent such great and terrible suffering]. The power of the Councillors is emphasised through the use of the capitalized verb.

After making four concrete suggestions for preventive measures, proposing fines for non-compliance, which underscores the clarity of her thinking, she concludes by rhetorically drawing attention to her lowly status with the concomitant expectation of gentlemanly conduct: ‘Tudo espero do cavalheirismo e bondade de V. Ex.as. de quem sou humilde e respeitosa serva’. [I trust in your chivalry and goodness, great sirs, and I am your humble and respectful servant]. By cleverly describing herself as such, she is tactically deploying female weakness as a rhetorical trope, thereby using femininity in a posture most likely to elicit a positive reaction from those in high office. This is not something she will do so blatantly when dealing with other causes, as we shall see.

The next editorial was a follow-up on the same topic, this time a petition to family heads (Apelo: aos chefes de família, n. 67) [Appeal: to the heads of household, n.67]. Although the majority would have been male, she was careful to include women by addressing ‘todo o homem e mulher em cujo peito palpita um coração compassivo’ [every man and woman in whose breast a compassionate heart beats]. She underlined that, within the jurisdiction of their own homes, men and women had the opportunity to lead through both words and deeds. She stressed that, by expecting and enforcing a more humane treatment of animals such as horses and cats, all readers could effect change in the behaviour of their servants and children.

More unexpectedly, in her bid to tackle the cruel handling of poultry – described as ‘a prática de atar criação pelas pernas, e assim em molhos, levá-la de cabeça para baixo à venda pelas ruas de Lisboa’ [the practice of binding chickens by their legs and carrying them upside down in bunches through the streets of Lisbon, offering them for sale] – she then gave a striking example of grassroots activism, dating back to the time of the debate surrounding the abolition of slavery in England:

Posso porém assegurar-lhes que em Londres quando se tratava de resgatar os escravos da Jamaica, medida que, como todo o arrojo de benevolência civilizadora, teve que arcar com poderosa e enérgica oposição, a arraia-miúda *recusava* comprar açúcar fabricado por escravos. A mulher que entrava numa tenda a comprar o seu vintém de açúcar tinha sempre o cuidado de recomendar que lhe não dessem *trabalho de escravos*. Ela pouco entendia da questão, mas o marido que lia os jornais ou os ouvia ler e frequentava os *meetings* públicos ensinava-lhe o recado. (n. 67: 1)

[I can, however, assure you that in London, when there was a move to free the slaves of Jamaica, a measure which, as any courageous act of civilizing benevolence, faced strong and fervent opposition, the social small-fry *refused* to buy sugar produced by slaves. A woman going into a shop to buy her pound of sugar would always take care to advise them not to give her *slave-work*. Whilst she knew little of the matter, her husband, who read the news and went to public meetings taught her what to say.]

The example of ordinary English house-wives, boycotting the trade in sugar from Jamaica in protest against slavery, is particularly effective here: it showed that women from all walks of life could be mobilised for a just cause. It moreover emphasises Wood’s long-

standing interest in social reform and activism, dating back to her time in England. Her contention was that a similar boycott by Portuguese consumers in connection with the mishandling of poultry would lead vendors to change their ways.

Unfortunately, the closing paragraph of this particular editorial was not entirely well-judged, culturally speaking, for she contrasts the (foreign) example of a young schoolboy who went from tormenting and destroying bird nests to protecting them, with the on-going cruelty of (Portuguese) bullfighting. One suspects that, insofar as bullfighting was a diversion deeply ingrained in national culture, this comment was bound to lead to a loss of credence for her cause as that of a mere *estrangeirada*.

Nonetheless, her fight for the protection of animals continued. In n. 88 'À Ex.ma Câmara Municipal de Lisboa' [To the Esteemed City Council of Lisbon], Wood once more addressed the authorities, this time citing from the Civil Code, in order to point out the existence of laws, but their lack of application in practice. She suggested that, in order to maintain their own self-respect, the authorities should put a stop to the sorry public spectacle of horses carrying heavy goods uphill when wounded and exhausted. At this juncture, Wood shows herself to be conversant with the law, and her logic is irrefutable. This enables her to go one step further in the following paragraph, where she stubbornly returns to the cruelty with which poultry are routinely carried to be sold. This time, her argument hinges on the contrast between everyday Portuguese behaviour and the penalties it would incur elsewhere in Europe, citing the example of a one-off act of animal cruelty that was immediately fined. The message is that Portugal is backward compared to the rest of Europe.

She closes by pre-empting potential objections that compassion towards humans is more urgent than towards animals. Her counter-argument is that there are already institutions to deal with a host of social problems: asylums; hospitals; charity establishments for orphans; and laws for wrongdoing, whereas animals do not have any champions.

In sum, the campaign for animal welfare is unexpected in the periodical, because in Portugal the issue had yet to register in public consciousness. Yet ironically, of all the causes that Wood embraced, it was the one that would yield fruit first, with the creation of the Portuguese Society for the Protection of Animals only a few years later, in late 1875.³ The newly-created Society sponsored from January 1877 a fortnightly magazine, *O Zoophilo* [*Zoophile*], printed by the Tipografia Luso-Britânica during the first year of its life, a fact that strongly points to the Woods' involvement from inception: indeed, they were the owners of Tipografia Luso-Britânica, where *A Voz Feminina* had been printed.

One decade later, *Os Maias* [*The Maias*] (1888) features a passing reference to the Society and its members:

Um dia [Maria Eduarda] viera indignada da Praça da Figueira, quase com ideias de vingança, por ter visto nas tendas dos galinheiros aves e coelhos apinhados em cestos, sofrendo durante dias as torturas da imobilidade e a ansiedade da fome. Carlos levava estas belas cóleras para o Ramalhete, increpava violentamente o Marquês, que era membro da Sociedade Protectora dos Animais. O Marquês, indignado também, jurava justiça, falava em cadeias, em costa de Africa...

E Carlos, comovido, ficava a pensar quanta larga e distante influência pode ter, mesmo isolado de tudo, um coração que é justo (1969: 368).

One day, [Maria Eduarda] had returned from the Praça da Figueira, filled almost with ideas of revenge, having seen on the poulterers' stalls baskets crammed with chickens and rabbits who suffered for days on end the torment of confinement and the pain of hunger. Carlos took this fine rage with him to Ramalhete and passionately berated the

³ According to <https://spanimais.wixsite.com/spa-lisboa/quem-somos>.

Marquis, who was a member of the Society for the Protection of Animals. The Marquis, equally indignant, vowed that justice would be done, and even spoke of imprisonment and deportation to the coast of Africa for the perpetrators. And Carlos, much moved, reflected upon the broad far-reaching influence that a just heart can have, even if that heart lives the most isolated of lives. (2016: 370)].

Although the vignette might seem like Eça poking harmless fun at a cause that was very marginal in those days, on further inspection what is disturbing is that Carlos is simply unable to envisage the possibility of Maria Eduarda taking direct action. As a woman removed from *res publica*, she is effectively bound to the domestic sphere, thus requiring the mediation of her lover to intervene in any public matter, however insignificant. In Eça's worldview, only men could be visualised as members of a pressure group - contrary to what happened in practice, since membership of the Portuguese Society for the Protection of Animals was open to both genders.⁴ Retrospectively at least, the irony lies in the assumption that even though Maria Eduarda's was a 'just heart', because she was a woman, her influence could only be second (or even third) hand. Since the ridiculously ineffectual Marquis over-reacts by advocating deportation, a punishment disproportionate to the crime, the just cause embraced by Maria Eduarda is ultimately belittled. By contrast, the real-life (and also transnational) Wood had intervened publicly to campaign for change – and pragmatically so, unlike the Marquis. But rather than acknowledge that women had a voice in the public sphere, it was more expedient for Eça de Queirós to present this particular cause as an irrelevant upper-class hobbyhorse.

Address to the Pope

⁴ *O Zoophilo* published lists of names of members of the Society. Both Francisca and her husband paid contributions until 1882.

Ultimately, at the time, the protection of animals could be dismissed as a fairly marginal and self-contained upper-class ideal, whereas other principles embraced by *A Voz Feminina* were certainly no laughing matter. For instance, throughout the lifespan of the periodical, in her bid to make the case in favour of female education, Wood called upon herself the arduous task of exposing the obscurantism fostered by the Catholic Church. Immediately after her first two petitions to the City Council, as if emboldened by her own momentum, it is nonetheless arresting to find her addressing no less a person than the Pope himself (n.68: 1-2).

The pretext for this untitled editorial stems from a recent pronouncement by the Pius IX, who had stated his objection to the opening of courses to French women because ‘*estão preparando, não boas mães de família, mas mulheres enfunadas com vã e oca ciência*’ [they are preparing not good family mothers, but women *puffed up with vain and empty knowledge*] (italics in the original).⁵ At this point, Wood challenges the leader of the Catholic Church: ‘Seja-me permitido perguntar a Sua Santidade donde deriva ela esta ilação?’ [Allow me to ask His Holiness how he arrived at such a conclusion?]. She continues in the same vein with a series of other rhetorical questions addressed to him (but by extension her readership too) that underline that he lacks concrete proof that learning is detrimental to women, given that until very recently the number of those taught to read and write was almost negligible.

A follow-up argument highlighted that academic study had not changed men for the worse, quite the contrary. At this juncture, Wood did not resist the temptation of reminding her readers of shameful episodes in Church History, including the massacre of St Bartholomew's Day in 1572 and the Inquisition, using highly charged language, chosen for its rhetorical effect:

⁵ See Mayeur (1971).

Pergunto mais, meu Senhor, os estudos académicos, os estudos de ciências têm deteriorado os homens? Têm feito deles maus pais de família? Não por certo. Os homens eram maus pais, tirânicos maridos e pseudocristãos, quando não estudavam, ou quando só estudavam teologia e os enigmas da metafísica. Então queimava-se o próximo, frigia-se o próximo, torturava-se o próximo; então a carnificina de S. Bartolomeu, então o império do Santo Tribunal da Inquisição! Agora, que os homens se ocupam de ciências, que estudam e que se *atrevem* a cogitar, já não há desses brinquedos horripilantes. (n.68: 1)

[Indeed, let me ask, dear Sir, if academic studies and the pursuit of science have lessened men? Have they made them bad heads of families? Of course not. Men were bad fathers, tyrannical husbands and pseudo-Christians when they did not study, or when they only studied theology and the mysteries of metaphysics. Then they burned their neighbours, fried their neighbours, tortured their neighbours; then was the slaughter of Saint Bartholomeu, then was the empire of the Holy Office of the Inquisition! Now that men explore the sciences, study and *dare* to think, there are no longer such horrific entertainments.]

Wood alternates between addressing the Pope by his title as ‘Sua Santidade’ [Your Holiness] and the more familiar ‘meu Senhor’ [dear Sir]. The latter is used sarcastically, thereby placing her an equal footing with him. The daringness of doing so cannot be overstated: it would have been a controversial behaviour coming from a man -- coming from the pen of a woman, someone in a subordinate position, not only in the eyes of the Church, but also of society as a whole, it was nothing short of revolutionary. After contrasting a past marred by inhuman cruelty with a present characterized by the fact that the study of philosophy and science have

immeasurably improved mankind, criticism of the Pope in the second half of her editorial centres on his allegedly deficient understanding of the Christian message of love. This is another extraordinarily provocative move, given that she was writing for a Portuguese audience at a time when, in the absence of separation between state and church, Catholicism ruled. Moreover, the first Vatican Council (1869-70) was soon to enshrine the dogma of papal infallibility. Consequently, to interpellate the Pope so as to cast aspersions on his lack of charity and love towards others, was almost heretical.

She intimates that his uncharitable stance is responsible for perpetuating the gross injustice of women's lack of access to education. In that vein, she compares upper-class Portuguese women to Chinese women, in an allusion to the practice of foot-binding. As for lower-class women, she points out that they are entirely at the service of their children and husband, and yet are despised by them. A related argument, then, becomes that men themselves are dissatisfied with the current state of affairs, as evidenced by their plentiful attacks on women for alleged faults. Here, she wittily piles up in a single sentence, for comic effect, a list of depreciative adjectives, 'vaidosas, frívolas, míopes, débeis, invejosas, traidoras, indolentes... que sei eu!' [vain, frivolous, short-sighted, weak, jealous, treacherous, indolent... I don't know what else!] before dismissing it with the succinct statement that she is tired and sick of it: 'O catálogo é longo e a pena está cansada' [The list is long and my pen is exhausted] (n.68: 1). She then cleverly turns the argument on its head, remarking that if women are as bad as they are generally painted, not much can be lost by giving them an opportunity. Her profound conviction is that they can only improve. In fact, she suggests that they will be cleansed from their previous flaws, flaws for which men are ultimately responsible according to her: 'limpas de todas as nódoas, de todas as máculas que hão recebido passando pelas mãos dos homens' [cleaned of all the stains, of all the taints with which they have been tarnished upon passing through the hands of men] (n.68: 2).

This enables her to outline an alternative to the Catholic Church, and wax lyrical about her vision for a church of peace, love, unity and solidarity in ‘tempos vindoiros’ [days to come]. Wood’s final arguments are squarely situated in the ‘here and now’: according to her the French Education Minister, Duruy, was simply retrospectively redressing the injustice against multiple women who had suffered at the hands of male tyrants. The women alluded to, the ill-fated Marie Antoinette, Princess Lambale, Madame Roland, Charlotte Corday, and Marie Sombreuil are, with the notable exception of the Queen Marie Antoinette, revolutionary women celebrated for their politics and/or their outstanding courage. This list implicitly contrasts with the catalogue of saints that she had alluded to earlier, and condemned for blatant misogyny: Saint Bernard, Saint Jerome, Saint Francis Xavier, Saint Gregory, ‘e vários outros barões canonizados, *très bien aimés* de Sua Santidade’ [and various other canonised gentlemen *much loved* by Your Holiness] (n.68: 2).

By rehabilitating these audacious women, she was urging the Pope, and by extension her readers, to move with the times. She affirms that the clock cannot be turned back on the ‘great cause’ of women’s rights for, even if French women were to backtrack, British ladies would stand resolute, thanks to the support of their male peers:

As mulheres francesas, meu Senhor, já não recuam, e se recuassem, nos domínios da preclara e virtuosíssima Rainha Vitória está recrutando-se uma coorte de denodadas senhoras que capitaneadas por alguns dos espíritos varonis mais ilustres do nosso século, caminha a glorioso triunfo; e debaixo dos seus estandartes que as brisas dos céus afagam, caminhará, enquanto a sua causa for a da paz e de justiça universal, esta ínfima e humilde portuguesa. (n.68: 2)

[French women, my dear Sir, do not retreat, and even if they were to do so, in the lands of the distinguished and virtuous Queen Victoria, there is a cohort of intrepid women gathering rank who, led by some of the most brilliant male minds of our century, march towards triumphant glory; and under their banners which the sky's breeze ruffles, whilst their cause be that of peace and universal justice, this insignificant and humble Portuguese woman will march with them.]

At this point, Wood is implicitly contrasting the attitude of British men, described as having brilliant minds, with that of the backward Pope, unflatteringly labelled as 'ancião belicoso' [pugnacious old man] a couple of paragraphs earlier.⁶ Let us recall here that in Britain, in advance of the second Reform Bill in 1867, John Stuart Mill had presented to Parliament a petition in favour of female suffrage. Orchestrated by Barbara Bodichon, it collected 1499 signatures in the space of a mere fortnight.⁷

Furthermore, the political enfranchisement of women, presented as the cause of progress (a word nevertheless never used in this editorial), is described as a transnational movement, giving it stronger credibility in practice. Over a rousing six-line long final sentence, Wood deploys emotional poetic language ('as brisas dos céus afagam'), and the use of the future 'caminhará' to show her determination to join the [transnational] banner of female emancipation, even if she, a Portuguese woman, remains isolated for the time being. In practice, in the light of the growing number of women across Europe adhering to the cause, her current insignificance ('ínfima e humilde') functioned as yet another factor of persuasion to convince her readership of the legitimacy of feminist claims, since it implied that Portugal's intellectual backwardness was in urgent need of remedy. Through a combination of

⁶ The Pope was by then in his late seventies. See <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Pius-IX>.

⁷ See Pazos-Alonso (2017a).

rational argument and rhetoric, then, she clearly hoped to persuade her readers – Portuguese women and men – to back what she held up as the cause of peace and universal justice (n.68: 2).

Open Letter to Castelar, ‘digno deputado a Cortes o Il.mo Sr. D. Emílio Castelar’ [worthy delegate to Parliament, the Honourable Mr. Emílio Castelar]

It is Wood’s unwavering belief in the transnational cause of women’s rights that leads her, a mere four weeks later, to address an open letter to the revolutionary Spanish leader Emilio Castelar (n.º 72). The periodical reacted at various points to democratic developments in neighbouring Spain, following the dethronement of Isabel II in 1868 and ensuing proclamation of the First Republic. This time, Wood’s strategic open letter to a man in high office stems from the conviction that Castelar is a potential ally:

Eu sei que há de haver no país de V. S.^a, e no meu, quem me censure por causa desta carta, ou mais bem da *chimera* sobre a qual ela versa. Está isso no curso natural do progresso; mas também o está que os séculos façam justiça a quem de um modo ou de outro labuta dedicando-se ao melhoramento da sociedade, e ao esclarecimento da justiça e da verdade. (...) Os séculos (...) não levantado Espinosa da abjeção em que os homens no seu tempo o haviam lançado. (n.72: 1)

[I know that there will be people, in your country as much as in mine, who criticise me on account of this letter, or rather, on account of the *chimera* it discusses. This is a natural part of the course of progress; but so are the centuries doing justice to whoever has, in one way or another, fought, dedicating themselves to the betterment of society

and to the enlightenment of justice and truth. (...) The centuries (...) have raised Spinoza from the abjection into which the men of his own time had cast him.]

Quite apart from the allusion to Spinoza, a symbol of religious dissidence, Wood goes on to refer to other visionaries and/or nonconformists who generated controversy in their lifetime such as Socrates, Columbus, Molière, and Harvey, in order to highlight that the passage of time had rehabilitated such pioneers. Only then does she fully explain that the *chimera* she dreams of concerns the situation of women:

Mas sr. D. Emilio Castelar, V. S.^a que é na Europa o verdadeiro campeão da liberdade não sofismada por dogmas e erros vetustos; V. S.^a preclaro filho dessa gloriosa Espanha que surgiu das cinzas da morte política linda como a *phenix* para dar às nações da terra o exemplo sem precedente de uma revolução, na qual (excetuando a clerezia, sempre adversa ao progresso do racionalismo) as paixões e o antagonismo individual não cedido o predomínio ao sentimento do bem da pátria; V. S.^a que sabe por experiência própria o que é ser oprimido, menoscabado, vituperado, e perversamente interpretado, não pode deixar de simpatizar com os anelos da alma de uma mulher por ver o seu sexo elevado da abjeção moral em que jaz, à categoria de entes cogitativos e inteligentes, e à fruição de todas as regalias políticas, como uma metade da humanidade, importante pela missão que o criador lhe confiou. (n.72: 1)

[But Mr Emilio Castelar, my Good Sir, you who, in Europe, are the true champion of a liberty not swathed in sophistry, dogmas and decrepit errors; You, distinguished son of that glorious Spain which rose from the ashes of political death, beautiful as a phoenix, to bring the Earth's nations an unprecedented example of a revolution in

which (with the exception of the clergy, always resistant to the progress of rationalism) individual passion and antagonism have given way to the country's well-being; You, knowing from personal experience what it means to be oppressed, offended, condemned and misunderstood, must surely sympathise with the aspirations lodged in the soul of a woman, to see her sex raised from the moral abjection in which it lies, to the category of reasonable and intelligent beings, and to the enjoyment of all political privileges, as half of humanity, important on account of the mission with which its creator entrusted it.]

This highly rhetorical ten-line sentence interpellates Castelar as the true champion of freedom in a born-again democratic Spain. She includes keywords like 'progresso do racionalismo' and 'bem da pátria' and, in order to win over her interlocutor, reminds him of his own past trials and tribulations, before mentioning women's aspirations to be regarded as 'entes cogitativos e inteligentes', and by the same token to enjoy 'todas as regalias políticas'.

Although Wood is introducing the thorny question of the vote, before pursuing further the topic of women as intellectual equals, her next paragraph expands over a six-line sentence on women's mission as mothers in a bid to enlist his sympathy: 'Esta missão, meu senhor, é a de tutelar o desenvolvimento moral da infância' [This mission, good sir, is to guide children's moral development]. Then, she alludes to progress being made elsewhere so that, by the time she broaches the question of equality again, it can be couched as a matter of unjustly withheld political rights:

V. S.^a por certo não é daqueles que disputam à mulher o dote da inteligência! Não é possível à vista das provas que as americanas e as inglesas estão dando ao mundo de

uma intelectualidade tão vasta e tão rigorosa; à vista dessa lide renhida que as súbditas de Sua Majestade Britânica estão mantendo contra aqueles que lhes negam os seus direitos políticos; à vista desse movimento do sexo, desperto do seu longo sono, que se faz sentir em toda a Europa. (n.72: 2)

[My Good Sir, you are surely not one of those men who question the gift of intelligence upon women! It is not possible, given the proof with which American and English women are providing the world, of such vast and rigorous intellect; given the firm resistance which the servants of Her Majesty Britannia hold against those who deny them their political rights; given such a movement of the fairer sex which, awoken from a long slumber, is making itself known across all of Europe.]

Wood's plea is furthermore cleverly interspersed with a paragraph that pre-empts potential opposition, with the argument that women's mission as mothers and housewives, while it demands the public elevation of their status, in practice should also serve to allay overblown fears of ensuing social disorder:

Tão pouco é possível que D. Emilio Castelar seja um desses homens que supõem a mulher ilustrada, a mulher elevada à dignidade que lhe compete, à fruição de regalias civis e de direitos políticos, capaz de abandonar o seu lar doméstico, e os seus deveres de mãe e de dona de casa. (n.72: 2)

[Neither could you, good sir, be one of those men who think that the enlightened woman, the woman who is raised up to the dignity which befits her, to the enjoyment

of civil privileges and political rights, should be capable of abandoning her domestic home, and her responsibilities as a mother and housewife]

This logically leads her to ask the Republican leader for women to be included in the democratic widening of political rights, evoked here under the banner of the famous French Revolution slogan and demonstrating that Wood was fully aware that the recent Spanish Constitution of 1869 had enshrined the principle of universal male suffrage:

Apelo, pois, à grandiosidade do seu espírito, ao seu amor da justiça imparcial e universal; apelo em nome do meu sexo para que sejamos incluídas nesse brado de “liberdade, fraternidade e igualdade” com que V. S.^a fechou o seu memorável discurso de 12 de abril. (n.72: 2)

[I therefore call on you, on the greatness of your spirit, on your love of impartial and universal justice; I call on you, in the name of my sex, to include us in that call for “liberty, fraternity and equality”, with which you ended your memorable speech on 12th April.]

Castelar’s famous speech on religious freedom, and the separation between state and Church, made his name in Spain and abroad and would have been swiftly reported in the Portuguese press.⁸ What is quite remarkable, however, is that Wood saw it for what it was: a watershed moment in nineteenth-century politics. She concluded by explicitly urging Castelar to make history by being the first to grant women equal rights: ‘levante V. S.^a também a voz como apóstolo da manumissão da mulher, e que seja a nobre Espanha a primeira nação da terra a

⁸ http://www.cervantesvirtual.com/obra-visor/discurso-sobre-la-libertad-religiosa--0/html/feedc9c0-82b1-11df-acc7-002185ce6064_1.html#I_1_

proclamar um princípio de igualdade sem reserva' [make your voice heard, good sir, as an apostle for the manumission of women, and let noble Spain be the first nation on the Earth to speak out for equality across the board]. The use of the term 'manumission' is perhaps not innocent here, since slavery was still operational in Cuba at the time and Castelar was known to be an abolitionist.⁹

Above all, Wood was quick to seize a historically unique opportunity to campaign on behalf of women's political rights, by the most obvious means at her disposal: a petition in the press addressed to an influential and potentially sympathetic interlocutor. Needless to say, the intention was also to draw the attention of her readership to the controversial theme of political equality for women in the Portuguese context as well. Reading between the lines, the aim was to give her readers food for thought when confronted with the gap between 'progressive' Spain and 'backward' Portugal, since this technique of spotlighting backwardness was one that Wood had deployed in her previous open letters. It is not known if Wood's open letter reached Castelar; it may have done so since there is evidence that he wrote a short undated note to Guiomar Torresão, Wood's right arm in *A Voz Feminina* (1910: 68). In a newly-republican Spain in the throes of political change, however, the battle for female suffrage would have been too divisive to be seriously entertained. At any rate the Spanish Republic fell in 1874, too soon to see any legal change. Accordingly, Spanish and Portuguese women were only granted the vote half a century later, in 1931, and in the latter case with significant restrictions based on educational level. This protracted timeline showcases how trail-blazing Wood's activism in the 1860s actually was.

Backlash and Cultural Memory Loss

⁹ Castelar would go down in history, among other reasons, for his role in bringing about abolition in Puerto Rico and Cuba, a cause he had first embraced in his 1859 book *La redención del esclavo*.

Needless to say, the contentious ideas so vocally espoused in the magazine triggered a backlash: in particular, the periodical *O Bem Público* [*The Public Good*] mounted a hate campaign against *A Voz Feminina* for nearly two years. In 1868 it published eight articles, seven of them unsigned and characterised by personal attacks on Wood; the following year, there were even more: ten, also unsigned.¹⁰ Most deployed violent and aggressive language, including repeatedly referring to the periodical as a ‘folha hermafrodita’ [hermaphrodite paper]. The reaction to the closure of *O Progresso* on 22 January 1870 may serve to illustrate the general tone: ‘Os seus lábios são apenas órgãos de inépcias, e de prosas rococó, onde o barbarismo dos conceitos está em perfeita harmonia como o barbarismo das palavras’ [Its lips are merely an organ for ineptitude, and for extravagant prose in which the barbarity of its concepts is in perfect harmony with the barbarity of its language] (1870: 230). Wood’s ideas were thus de-authorised not only on the grounds of inadequacies of form (‘barbarismo das palavras’) but also content (‘barbarismo dos conceitos’).

It is worth delving further into one article in particular, titled ‘A livre pensadora’ [The free-thinking woman] (1869: 362-364). It offers a virulent response to the article where she had addressed to the Pope and was clearly intended to be a denunciation. Indeed, in the main body of the article, the fact that Wood was openly accused of ‘espírito maçónico’ [a spirit of freemasonry]) bears this out. Shortly after, the unnamed author contemptuously suggests that she might wish to read of the biographies of the ‘matronas livre-pensadoras que vão acima nomeadas’ [aforementioned free-thinking matrons] (Ninon de Lenclos; Mme de Chatelet; Deffand; d’Epinay; Roland), thereby de-authorising learned women as unfeminine matrons. This, of course, was an entirely misguided argument: while the anonymous author refers to these names to bolster his argument that the Pope was entirely justified in preventing women

¹⁰ In 1868: 275-277, 300-301, 307-309, 325, 331-333, 339-340, 378-379. In addition, still in 1868, there was a letter from a reader, J.A. da Graca Bareto, who wished to clarify that he was not the anonymous author of previous articles (348-349). In 1869: 236-237, 244-245, 362-364, 391, 395-396 (first semester) and 19-20, 34-36, 49-50, 74-75, 107-108 (second semester).

from gaining access to higher education, today these forward-thinking intellectuals are remembered for their Parisian salons linked with the Enlightenment. If we assume the anonymous author to be the Marquês de Valada, the director in charge of *O Bem Público*, then a further irony is that he is primarily remembered today for being outed as the protagonist of a homosexual scandal in 1881.¹¹ Retrospectively, this scandal makes his black-and-white morality seem at best misplaced, and at worst deeply ironic.

It is worth dwelling briefly on the question of female Freemasonry, for it was highly topical in 1860s Portugal. Oliveira Marques's dictionary lists 'Direito e Razão' as the first adoptive lodge, in Portugal, established in Lisbon in the first semester of 1864, with nineteen workers (1986: 476-7). It is conceivable that Wood was one of them bearing in mind that there is evidence that her favourite nephew, Clarimundo Martins, to whom she dedicated her novel *Maria Severn* (1869) was a Freemason.¹² Even more compelling is the fact that the second Count of Parati, Grand Master of Grande Oriente Lusitano between 1859 and 1869, was listed in *A Voz Feminina* as having been one of its subscribers from the outset (n.94: 179). Certainly, Wood's contacts with Freemasons would fit in with the fact that her periodical is an early instance of women's transnational political mobilization in Portugal.¹³ On the other hand, the leader of the first female freemason lodge, Antónia Gertrudes Pusich (Costa 2016: 53-57), herself a pioneer journalist, did not contribute to *A Voz Feminina*. In truth, the monarchic and Catholic Pusich was unlikely to have warmed to the anti-clerical and republican cause espoused by Wood, which conversely aligns the latter with the ideological

¹¹ For further details, see Howes (2002).

¹² An entry in the article 'History of the Essex Lodge of Free Masons' by William Leavitt documented that he came to Salem (Massachusetts, United States) in 1855 and was admitted to the Lodge on 7 August 1860 (1861: 272).

¹³ In addition, the Woods had links with utopian socialism, insofar as one of William's siblings, C[harles] T[horold] Wood, had translated into English Madame Gatti de Gamond's book *Fourier et son système*, in 1842.

tenets of ‘a futura geração de feministas...[que] acrescentará à questão de género a questão do anticlericalismo e do regime político (Costa, 2016: 59).

The unrelenting diatribes by the Marquês de Valada no doubt took their toll on the editor and the periodical’s readership. Six months after the attack published as ‘A livre pensadora’, Wood communicated the closure of the paper to subscribers:

Assim pois um assunto calorosamente discutido em França e em Inglaterra; estabelecido como princípio inconvertível na América do Norte, e tacitamente admitido na Alemanha, na Suíça, e mesmo na Rússia, aqui não tem tido outro efeito que o de evocar uma corrente de oposição indireta e clandestina (...). Um antagonismo cruel e quase incrível, mas à surdina, da parte das senhoras; um silêncio hostil da parte dos literatos; uma oposição acérrima das cabeças tonsuradas são os elementos gélidos e desalentadores que me fazem recuar. (94: 179)

[It is thus that a matter so passionately discussed in France and in England; established as an undeniable principle in North America, and tacitly acknowledged in Germany, Switzerland, and even in Russia, has here had no effect other than to elicit a wave of indirect and covert opposition (...). A cruel, almost unbelievable antagonism by stealth, on the part of ladies; the hostile silence of the men of letters; the fierce opposition of the tonsured heads; these are the frosty and disheartening elements which make me retreat.]

Wood lucidly ascribed this demise to a combination of reasons: firstly, women were suspicious of progress and unprepared to fight for their rights, leaving her a *persona non grata* in the capital. Secondly the indifference or hostility of men of letters (‘literatos’)

militated against change. Thirdly and most damagingly, in the absence of support on the part of influential male public intellectuals and lack of mobilization on the part of women, the clergy was ultimately able to manipulate public opinion against her. However, she defiantly claimed that they would not be able to suppress her name, despite – or precisely because of – their backwardness, so glaringly out of step with the rest of Europe and North America:

Não podem (...) impedir que o meu nome se ache arquivado como o da primeira mulher que neste país levantou a voz em prol dos direitos do seu sexo e contra o estado de abjeção moral e jurídica em que se acha metade do género humano. (94: 179)

[They cannot (...) stop my name from finding a place in the archives as that of the first woman who, in this country, spoke up for the rights of her sex and against the state of moral and legal abjection in which half of the human race lies.]

Wood may not quite have been the first woman to speak up, but the extent of her engagement through the most public medium at her disposal -- the periodical press -- was certainly unprecedented in scope and reach. It proved that she could hold her own as a ‘mulher pensadora’ and had the guts to act. That said, the ‘dificuldades escabrosas que as mulheres encontram no século XIX’ that she had alluded to were far from imaginary. And over the next decade, the position of the *Geração de 70* with regard to female intellectuals was patronizing at best, and downright dismissive at worst, as evidenced by Ramalho’s misogynistic aphorism in *As Farpas* that women should produce ‘menos odes e mais caldo’ [less odes and more broth] (1877, X: 3). His reductive conflation of ‘literatas’ with poetry, however, promptly backfired: it elicited two swift and spirited responses, in a fitting demonstration that

women, through articles of opinion seeped in a finely judged irony, were surely his intellectual match.¹⁴ One of them was by Guiomar Torresão, who had been schooled by Wood, as they worked closely together in the ground-breaking project of *A Voz Feminina* (Pazos Alonso: 2017b).¹⁵

In the medium term, however, the erasure from cultural history of a formidable feminist thinker like Francisca Wood may have been compounded by the ambivalence that British women as ‘mestras’ (teachers and therefore intellectuals) elicited in Portugal (Abranches: 2002). The British ultimatum of 1890 also made it difficult for the next generation of intellectuals and activists, such as Angelina Vidal (1853-1917) to claim Wood as their foremother. And by the time that, in the early twentieth century, Adelaide Cabete (1867-1935), Ana de Castro Osório (1872-1935) and Carolina Beatriz Ângelo (1878- 1911) embarked on the struggle to gain the vote once more, Wood's intervention more than thirty years earlier was but a distant memory. As Owen and Pazos Alonso note ‘the lack of access to neglected female forebears was clearly a material problem for women writers at the beginning of the [twentieth] century’ (2011: 208).

Conclusion

One hundred and fifty years on, cultural memory loss is worth interrogating, especially in order to probe further the power dynamics and logic surreptitiously at work behind mechanisms of exclusion. As Ana Paula Ferreira perceptively argues, the (re)-construction of the Portuguese nation-state following the loss of Brazil in 1822 and ensuing civil wars, together with the rise of imperialism in Africa later in the century, entailed a variety of national(ist) discourses that attempted to pre-empt contamination by the New

¹⁴ The first was published under the pseudonym of Irmã de Caridade, in *Diário da Manhã*, For a transcription see *As Farpas*, vol XI, 20-26.

¹⁵ For an analysis of Torresão's rebuttal, see Lopes (2005).

Woman (1996: 129-30). At stake, especially from the 1870s onwards, was the domestication of female otherness present 'within the margins of the nation in the figure of a wild, uncivilised (...) and, hence, foreign feminine body' (1996: 129). No wonder then that Wood's 'female otherness' -- her unorthodox intellectual dissidence that laid bare structural male privilege -- was vilified as the 'improper' speech of a *estrangeirada*.

Wood's editorials and open letters discussed in this article uncover the extent to which she boldly anticipated both the anti-clerical stance of the *Geração de 70* and first wave of transnational feminism, and her active defence of animal welfare furthermore suggests that she was well ahead of her time. With the benefit of hindsight, it would be remiss to overlook her in any future survey of the history of ideas in the long nineteenth century in Portugal because her conceptualization of the nation seems so modern. Today, Wood can be acknowledged for what she truly was: a fearless female public intellectual, who claimed for herself cultural authority, as well as the right to think freely. She may have paid a heavy price, being effectively marginalized in her own lifetime, but it seems it was a risk that she was prepared to take because ultimately 'são os séculos e não o *dictum* dos homens que aquilatam a verdade' [it is the centuries, not the *dictum* of men, which measure the truth].

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Abstract

The present article focuses on the role of Francisca de Assis Martins Wood at the helm of a periodical endowed with a distinctively progressive ethos, *A Voz Feminina* [*The Female Voice*] subsequently rebranded *O Progresso* [*Progress*]. It argues that ahead in the famous all-male 1871 Casino Lectures Wood's editorials marked a turning-point in terms of a modern conceptualisation of politics and religion from a gendered perspective.

In her self-appointed mission to foster debate on religious, political and ethical questions, Wood deployed a variety of tactics. The article examines one recurrent discursive strategy: the publication of open letters, often in the form of petitions, addressed to men in positions of authority. After entreating the local authorities in Lisbon to deal with widespread cruelty to animals, Wood broadened her scope to more inflammatory issues: female education and the vote. Her public interventions, addressed to figureheads endowed with transnational significance, Pope Pius IX and the Spanish Republican leader Emilio Castelar, must be understood as political activism at a time when women's voices were not easily heard in the public sphere.

Keywords: Francisca Wood, nineteenth-century feminism, anticlericalism, animal welfare, Emilio Castelar, open letters.