

THE PUBLICISTS¹ IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY: THE GERMINATION OF
REPUBLICAN IDEAS IN BRAZILIAN NORTHEASTERN²

*AS PUBLICISTAS NO SÉCULO XIX: O GERMINAR DAS IDEIAS REPUBLICANAS
NO NORDESTE BRASILEIRO*

*LOS PUBLICISTAS EN EL SIGLO XIX: LA GERMINACION DE LAS IDEAS
REPUBLICANAS EN EL NORDESTE DE BRASIL*



Fernanda Daniella de França BEZERRIL
e-mail: fernandafrancaes@gmail.com



Charlton José dos Santos MACHADO
e-mail: charltonlara@yahoo.com.br



Fabiana SENA
e-mail: fabianasena@yahoo.com.br



Isabela Nathália Nunes TRISTÃO
e-mail: tristaoisabela@gmail.com

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¹ The term "publicist" here is taken from the idea of those who aimed to publicize their ideas and thoughts through publications in newspapers and magazines of the time.

² This article is the result of the research entitled "Education in the press of Paraíba between the transition from the empire to the republic (1884-1894)", referring to NOTICE No. 09/2021 UNIVERSAL DEMAND—FAPESQ/PB, coordinated by Prof. Dr. Fabiana Sena. The other authors are researchers of the project.

ABSTRACT: This study aims to present the writing of women in the newspapers of the provinces of Paraíba and Pernambuco, where women initiated the process of creating a female public space for their republican ideas. Therefore, this study is inscribed within the theoretical-methodological approach of New Cultural History. The newspapers researched for this work are located at the *Instituto Histórico e Geográfico da Paraíba*, situated in the downtown area of João Pessoa. These newspapers were understood as objects of the written culture of a specific time and place, paying attention to their originating practices. Thus, women's participation in 19th-century newspapers shows how these female publicists worked with the aim of emancipating women from patriarchal constraints. The press served as a platform for them, a place where it was possible to understand a community of female readers, giving visibility to what they wrote or thought at a particular time and place.

KEYWORDS: Women. Republic. 19th Century.

RESUMO: *Este trabalho tem como objetivo apresentar a escrita de mulheres nos jornais das províncias da Paraíba e Pernambuco, onde as mulheres deram início ao processo de criação do espaço público feminino para suas ideias republicanas. Para tanto, este estudo está inscrito na abordagem teórico-metodológica da Nova História Cultural. Os jornais pesquisados para este trabalho se encontram no Instituto Histórico e Geográfico da Paraíba, localizado no Centro da cidade de João Pessoa. Estes foram compreendidos como objeto da cultura escrita de um determinado tempo e lugar, atentando para suas práticas de que são provenientes. Assim, a participação das mulheres nos jornais do XIX mostra como essas publicistas trabalhavam no propósito de emancipar as mulheres dos limites patriarcais. A imprensa lhes serviu como espaço de tribuna, lugar onde é possível compreender uma comunidade de leitoras, dando visibilidade ao que escreviam ou pensavam em uma determinada época e lugar.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Mulheres. República. Século XIX.*

RESUMEN: *Este trabajo tiene como objetivo presentar la escritura femenina en los periódicos de las provincias de Paraíba y Pernambuco, cuyas mujeres iniciaron el proceso de creación de un espacio público femenino para sus ideas republicanas. Para ello, este estudio se inscribe en el enfoque teórico-metodológico de la Nueva Historia Cultural. Los periódicos investigados para este estudio se encuentran en el Instituto Histórico e Geográfico da Paraíba, situado en el Centro de la ciudad de João Pessoa. Fueron entendidos como objetos de la cultura escrita de un determinado tiempo y lugar, prestando atención a las prácticas de las que proceden. Así, la participación de las mujeres en los periódicos del siglo XIX muestra cómo estas publicistas trabajaban con el propósito de emancipar a las mujeres de los límites patriarcales. La prensa les sirvió como espacio tribunicio, un lugar donde es posible entender una comunidad de lectoras, dando visibilidad a lo que escribían o pensaban en un determinado tiempo y lugar.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Mujeres. República. Siglo XIX.*

Introduction

If I were asked what I think is chiefly responsible for the remarkable prosperity and growing strength of these people, I would answer that it is the superiority of their women (TOCQUEVILLE, 2000, p. 265, our translation).

In this work, we seek to expose the writings of some women in the newspapers, *Arauto Parahybano*³, *O Emancipador*⁴ and *Verdade*⁵, who initiated the process of creating a public space for women through their republican ideas in the Northern provinces of Brazil, Paraíba, and Pernambuco.

In this sense, it also means reflecting on the women who championed ideas through writings in the aforementioned newspapers, considering that they were the central focus of an educational and "civilizing" process in literate societies of the 19th century. Thus, inevitably, the study leads us to the following question: How did the writings of these women in the analyzed publications enable the confluence of republican ideas with movements breaking through the social and cultural boundaries reserved for their gender?

To do so, we will outline some historical elements that allow us to follow the process of the formation of the woman citizen, an active and autonomous member of the sovereignty of the body politic. We discuss this new social situation in which women become active figures in a new social contract⁶, understanding their role in the context of their primary organization.

In this national historical scenario, it becomes necessary to initially acknowledge that society was highly stratified between men and women, based on patriarchy. Interestingly, the field of female education encompassed all social classes, often not even differentiating between the literacy conditions of the lady and the slave. In other words, the status of women's intellectual inferiority within the structure of the patriarchal family was generally reinforced, so that from an early age, they were primarily trained to fulfill the role of motherhood and the well-known domestic chores. Not surprisingly, the debate on women's emancipatory citizenship in opposition to concepts traditionally rooted in a certain natural mission of the feminine became recurrent in literate spaces, such as the press and academia (ALVES, 1980).

³ Abolitionist periodical, with 16 individual issues registered at the IHGP, all from the year 1888.

⁴ The newspaper from the group constituted itself as the organ of the "Emancipadora Parahybana" (abolitionist group), with four individual issues registered at the IHGP covering the period from 1882-1883.

⁵ Newspaper located in the city of Areia, Paraíba, an abolitionist organ, with a single issue registered at the IHGP in the year 1888.

⁶ Pateman (1993, p. 17) criticizes the idea of the original contract, which excluded women from the political sphere, creating the field of freedom and domination, because for the author "the sense of civil liberty cannot be understood without the lost half of history, which reveals how men's patriarchal right over women is created by the contract."

But let's return to the epigraph above, as it demonstrates how women were a fundamental part of the nation-building process. In Brazil, the nation-building process slowly took shape from the 19th century onwards.

Among the newspapers circulating in the 19th century, there were those aimed at the female audience (SENA; MACHADO, 2014; SENA; CRUZ, 2012; CASADEI, 2011; ROCHA NETO, 2008; LIMA, 2007; CARVALHO, 2006), so that within their pages one could perceive the roles assigned to women during that period. Generally, these publications sought to "illustrate" the mother figure, presented clothing patterns or culinary recipes, or reproduced what has been conventionally termed "cheap" literature, such as novels. There were also newspapers written by women. Among these, we sought to highlight those that evidenced a militant stance in shaping the idea of female citizenship. Some of these newspapers were involved in the abolitionist and republican campaigns, being used as an expression of the demand for equal political rights, such as the right to vote.

By taking the female press as the object and source of research, it is necessary,

Therefore, we consider that the newspapers of the 19th century present themselves as instruments of social representation by offering clues to understanding how a society behaved at that time. They contain elements for understanding their customs, ideologies, habits, way of life, and customs. Regarding women's newspapers, these constitute relevant sources of research for those interested in the role of women within the society of a particular period, as well as seeking to understand the social relations between individuals (SENA; CRUZ, 2012, p. 69, our translation).

The newspapers researched for this study, *Arauto da Parahyba*, *O Emancipador* and *Verdade*, are located at the Historical and Geographical Institute of Paraíba, located in the center of the city of João Pessoa. These were understood as objects of the written culture of a specific time and place, paying attention to their originating practices.

From this understanding, this work is inscribed in the theoretical-methodological approach of the New Cultural History, which has considered the uses of writing as a very significant source for understanding how communities or individuals construct their representations of the world and invest them with meaning (CHARTIER, 1999).

Women in the Press

The involvement of women in the press began as early as the seventeenth century, through the publication of texts for female entertainment. The first women's newspaper, *Lady's*

Mercury, was founded in 1693 in England and served as a “sentimental counseling” tool for noblewomen. Since then, women’s newspapers have spread throughout the world, with Germans introducing horoscopes, Italians sharing knitting patterns, and starting to write “Catholic-themed columns,” highlighting the maternal figure.

From France emerged the model of women’s newspaper, which grew the most throughout the nineteenth century, the literary journal. In 1759, the public came into contact with the *Journal des Dames*, which featured stories, poems, book reviews, and theatrical plays written by both women and men (OLIVEIRA, 2009, p. 06, our translation).

France was one of the main countries responsible for the “spread of women’s periodicals in the Americas,” especially in Brazil. In the United States of America, in 1828, the *Ladie’s Magazine*, emerged, the first magazine edited by a woman, Sara Joseph Hale, considered one of the first American publicists.

According to Sena and Cruz (2012, p. 68), "In Brazil, women's press emerged only in the 1820s, in the province of Rio de Janeiro, with the publication of *O Espelho Diamantino* in 1827. In 1829, the *Mentor das Brasileiras* (1829-1832), appeared, published in the province of Minas Gerais." In 1852, the first genuinely female newspaper in Brazil was published, the *Jornal das Senhoras*⁷, founded by the Bahian Violante Atabalipa Ximenes de Bivar e Velasco⁸. According to Sodré (1983), women were beginning to break free from colonial seclusion and were now occupying spaces in salons and even in the streets. With this, the search for a specific type of periodical for them gained strength, initially as "light literature of pure fantasy, with no basis in reality" (SODRÉ, 1983, p. 198, our translation). Subsequently, fashion became a recurring theme in newspapers aimed at ladies, which did not prevent these women's demands from increasing as they began to participate in public life, outside the domestic environment. According to Buitoni, this trend of journalism in the nineteenth century can thus be defined:

[...] the traditional, which does not allow freedom of action outside the home and which magnifies domestic virtues and feminine qualities; and the

⁷ There is a debate about the true founder of this newspaper. In some places, Violante Atabalipa is identified as the founder—as recorded in the National Library's records. However, for some authors, the Argentine Joana Paula Manso de Noronha is mentioned as the founder (COSTA, 2007, p. 133).

⁸ Violante Atabalipa Ximenes de Bivar e Velasco was born in Bahia on December 1, 1817, and died in Rio de Janeiro on May 25, 1875. She was the daughter of Diogo Soares da Silva Bivar and Violante Lima de Bivar. Her father was a member of the Imperial Council and the first president of the Dramatic Conservatory of Rio de Janeiro, as well as the editor of the newspaper *Idade d'Ouro do Brazil* and the first national magazine, *As Variedades* or *Ensaio de Literatura*. Violante directed the *Jornal das Senhoras* until 1855 and was considered the first Brazilian female journalist by Joaquim Manuel de Macedo. The author advocated for intellectual equality between the sexes and founded another periodical similar to the *Jornal das Senhoras*, *O Domingo* (COSTA, 2007, p. 133).

progressive, which advocates for women's rights, placing great emphasis on education (BUITONI, 2019, p. 47, our translation).

In the *Jornal das Senhoras*, one can see, in almost every edition, gifts intended for women, often clothing patterns characterizing the trends of the time. In addition to topics related to fashion and poetry, the first issue of the newspaper attempts to define what Womanhood would be. And in this attempt at definition, it concludes:

Reform your moral education; let men no longer consider you their property. Be what God made you: a thinking being and not something that is moved from place to place without being consulted; and then, when that is done, we will talk.

However, this newspaper exclusively dedicated to Ladies will address these rights and this education, whose main tendency is the moral emancipation of women⁹ (JORNAL DAS SENHORAS, Rio de Janeiro, January 1, 1852, our translation).

That said, it presents that they were in pursuit of new achievements, not content with discussing fashion and "pleasant" literature, but also demanding better education. Thus, at the forefront of these mobilizations, some educated women, attuned to the cultural temperature of the time, already in the 19th century, albeit timidly, were critiquing the model of femininity confined to the domestic sphere and the cult of motherhood.

During this time, according to Costa (2007), the dominant idea was that presented by the French chronicler Charles d'Épilly, who said: "A woman would be sufficiently educated if she knew how to read guava jam recipes; more than that would be dangerous" (p. 132, our translation). Despite the situation presented, several newspapers were dedicated to female readers. In 1827, the first Brazilian periodical dedicated to women, *O Espelho Diamantino*, was organized, as previously mentioned, initially produced and circulated in Minas Gerais, and then transferred to Rio de Janeiro, where its first issues were republished. In the pages of this newspaper, the issue of female education was discussed, and in the same year, the first legislation regarding the instruction of girls became known, allowing their entry into elementary education. The example of this newspaper was soon followed in Minas Gerais with the *Mentor das Brasileiras*, in 1829, in Bahia with *O Despertador das Brasileiras* and in São Paulo with the *Manual das Brasileiras*, the latter two from 1830.

Even far from the Court, the publication of these newspapers aimed at the female audience was gaining strength, as can be seen with the emergence of titles such as: *O Espelho das*

⁹Tomo I. Available at: http://memoria.bn.br/pdf/700096/per700096_1852_00001.pdf. Accessed in: 10 jan. 2023.

Brazileiras, in 1831; *Jornal das Variedades*, in 1835; *Relator de Novellas*, in 1838; and *Espelho das Bellas*, n 1841, the latter published with the epigraph: "nothing is beautiful, nothing is amiable, without modesty and virtue" (COSTA, 2007, p. 132, our translation), which demonstrated a conception of a newspaper for the better formation of the beautiful, in this case, of the fair sex. All these newspapers were in circulation in the city of Recife. In 1860, *Bello Sexo* emerged in the same city. It is important to emphasize that these newspapers, until then, had been edited by men, only at the end of the 19th century did we have women actively writing, hence the importance and pioneering spirit of *Jornal das Senhoras*, founded in 1852, in Rio de Janeiro, aiming to "propagate enlightenment and cooperate with all its strength for the social improvement and moral emancipation of women" (COELHO, [21--], online, our translation).

Shortly after, Júlia de Albuquerque Sandy Aguiar was involved in Rio de Janeiro with *O Bello Sexo*¹⁰, a newspaper intended to provoke female expression in the press, soon followed by *O Sexo Feminino*, de 1875, in 1875, founded by Francisca Senhorinha da Motta Diniz, an influential woman invited to be a teacher in the Court, where she established the newspaper (COELHO, [21--], online, our translation). The latter became known as one of the first Brazilian women to advocate for the rights to education and women's suffrage (NASCIMENTO, 2009).

The increasing production and circulation of newspapers aimed at women occurred because there was an audience, according to Chartier (1999, p. 11, our translation), "a text only exists if there is a reader to give it meaning." And in the case of women, there was the significance of becoming increasingly present and active in a patriarchal society. According to this author, this community of female readers through newspapers aimed at them can be understood through the "establishment of an alterity that underpins subjective search" (CHARTIER, 1999, p. 14, our translation) and other moments of reading.

At other times, women writers in newspapers passed "unnoticed," without stamping their names on their pages. An example was Corina de Vivalde, daughter of Carlos Vivalde, who wrote in the newspapers directed by her father, *Ilustração do Brasil e South American Mail*. Corina "directed *Ilustração Popular*, collaborated on *Folha Nova*, by Manoel Carneiro, on *Gazetinha*; she was editor, in 1888, of José do Patrocínio's newspaper, in the *Cidade do Rio*" (SODRÉ, 1983, p. 222, our translation) and, even after marrying Visconti Coaracy, continued to write and collaborate in various newspapers of the time.

¹⁰ The *Bello Sexo* appears in two different references, one claiming it to be a newspaper edited in Pernambuco, and another in Rio de Janeiro. It is not clear whether these are two newspapers with the same name or if it was an error by one of the authors (COSTA, 2007; MUZART, 2003).

The concealment of authorship of women's texts was an imposition on the newspaper editor. Such submission to this imperative, in a way, caused women's texts to circulate among the public, although it was recognized that "it is not [guaranteed] that the regime of anonymity [(disguised, fantasized, usurped)] is the one that commands the production of the statements" (CHARTIER, 1999, p. 57, our translation).

Until the letter of the law endorsed women's participation in Brazilian political life, much happened around their mobilization. A "public opinion" attentive to the so-called "women's issue" was still brewing in the Empire and the early republican decades, leading to the proliferation of newspapers and associations engaged in discussing women's place in national public life. It was not uncommon, therefore, to see in the press of the time a repertoire of criticisms of the movement, which, according to more conservative exponents, aimed to distance women from domestic duties, from caring for their husbands, and from the upbringing of children, functions legitimized by science, religion, and the State.

It was not without purpose that women faced difficulties in their pursuit of education, as their demands gradually extended further. Thus, according to the historian Branca Moreira Alves, the struggle for women's suffrage as an organized movement began with the premise that:

The first step, therefore, lay in education. Faced with the enormous obstacle posed by women's ignorance, which only reinforced their isolation and life limitations, voting and political participation would have no meaning (ALVES, 1980, p. 89, our translation).

The Place of Women's Writing

The region we now call the Northeast¹¹ was a "fertile ground" for women's press in the 19th century. Women began to publish articles, poems, and stories addressing various themes of the so-called "female universe" and also issues such as abolition and the Republic, "aiming for greater participation in the areas of education, professionalization, and politics," reflecting

¹¹ According to Schwarcz and Starling (2020): the region we now know as the Northeast separated from the North in the 1920s and finally obtained its birth certificate in 1942, in the first regional division created by Vargas (North, Northeast, Midwest, South, and East) during the Estado Novo. Although this term may seem anachronistic for the 19th century, I use it to delimit the current geographical space because I understand, based on Albuquerque Júnior (2009, p. 51), that "the Northeast is the child of the ruin of the old country's geography, segmented between 'North' and 'South.' The 'natural' space of the old North gave way to an artificial space, a new region, the Northeast, already foreshadowed in the cyclopean mechanical mills used in works against droughts, in the late previous decade."

"not only women's concerns about their feminine condition but also the national political moment" (MUZART, 2003, p. 227-228, our translation).

The debate initiated by these women from the Northern provinces, as they were referred to, reflects the effervescence of political, revolutionary, and progressive ideas that were produced in the region. Thus, they took advantage of the scarce spaces in the press to give visibility to issues that were at the center of their interests, such as education, access to literature, and political participation in defense of abolitionist causes. Furthermore, this community of readers aimed to "cement forms of sociability equally intertwined in symbols of privacy - family intimacy, mundane coexistence, literate collusion" (CHARTIER, 1999, p. 16-17, our translation). In this sense, it was not enough to debate/write/publish through the press topics of interest to women, but to understand that such writings depend on the forms that reach their readers, as "reading is always a practice embodied in gestures, spaces, habits" (CHARTIER, 1999, p. 13, our translation).

Although most studies on women's press in the 19th century focus their attention on the publications that circulated in the Court, monitoring the periodicals published in the northeastern provinces, such as those configured in Paraíba, demonstrates a significant debate on women's rights and nation-building in the region. Moreover, there is an expectation of insertion in the national debate on the subject. In this sense, Evaldo Cabral de Mello asserts that "the foundation of the Empire is still today a story told exclusively from the perspective of Rio de Janeiro" (MELLO, 2004, p. 11, our translation).

Attempting Emancipation

An "*anonyma parahybana*" signed, in the *Arauto Parahybano*, on May 20, 1888, a celebratory article on abolition¹². Some of these women engaged in building a female public opinion often associated their emancipatory demands with the struggle for the end of slavery in the country.

¹² "Freedom or Death" - It is the cry that must resound from all corners of the Empire of the Southern Cross; it is the shout raised millions of times by millions of people. Similar to that raised on the banks of the Ypiranga, it will resonate, ever and ever, in the pages of Brazil's history; it will be written in the books of all peoples, of all nations. / Freedom! For your sake there were martyrs, who immortalized themselves by action and by effect, figures who are pointed out as stalwart defenders, by the encouraging language and adherents that we all are, ready to avenge the insult of the executioner who attempted to strike down a thousand times. / Let the martyrs be; let us not remember the ingratitude of men, on a festive day of such glory (...) / I joined with you, great fighters, and fell for the cause; I join today and greet the goddess who arrives, uttering the words of someone on March 25: "Ava! It faltered, and without further reasons, darkness opened to the sun of Liberty! (...)" (*Arauto Parahybano*, Parahyba do Norte, May 20, 1888).

The 1880s were indeed marked by discussions around abolitionism, which was gaining widespread attention and also echoed in the Paraíba press. *O Emancipador* called on women, in 1883, to take a stand against the scourge of slavery, "an example of depravity" to which families were subjected, these "bad habits" that penetrated "through this part of our house" - the kitchens and the slave quarters - keeping them "in ignorance" and "brutality" and: "making us unaware of the moral bond that binds us to humanity" (BEZERRIL, 2013, p. 82-83, our translation).

Responsible for the education of the family, women should then influence their husbands, fathers, brothers, and sons and involve them in the abolitionist cause. On the eve of the emancipatory decree, the newspaper *Arauto Parahybano* reported an abolitionist meeting organized at the Santa Cruz Theater:

The distinguished and illustrious ladies residing in this capital, and especially the gracious women of Paraíba, fervently direct our prayers so that, as mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters, they exert their generous efforts on behalf of the captives, as they have been accustomed to do in all noble endeavors, so that this municipality may be declared free in the shortest possible time. We hope that the appeal we have taken the liberty of addressing to the illustrious ladies will not be in vain, as we powerfully trust them, like guardian angels of the enslaved unfortunate (ARAUTO PARAHYBANO, arahyba do Norte, May 6, 1888, our translation)¹³.

As the approach of May 13 drew near, more articles accumulated in the same vein. The newspapers asserted that abolition was imminent and appealed to feminine sentiments. The article advocating for the liberation of slaves, entitled "*Luz e Harmonia*", by J. J. de Abreu, addressed the readers: "imploing your strength, which comes from heaven, your blessed love, your captivating laughter, your consoling charity, in favor of wretched enslaved" ("*Luz e Harmonia*", VERDADE, Parahyba do Norte, May 6, 1888, our translation.)

In addition to demonstrating how feminine morality could influence men's decisions, the journalist also asserted:

To your virtues, to your affections, to the love dedicated, which you consecrate in the home to the family, man owes the peace of his conscience, the noble actions of his will. Through your gentle habits, we become accustomed to gentleness; through your love, we practice goodness, we seek to elevate ourselves to please you (VERDADE, May 6, 1888, our translation).

¹³ "Second abolitionist meeting at the Santa Cruz Theater," *Arauto Parahybano*, Parahyba do Norte, May 6, 1888.

The same journalist does not hesitate to attribute responsibility to women for the freedom of the captives:

It is your husbands, your brothers, your sons, whom you teach the holy path, that misfortune traverses, asking for their help for those who suffer, who, to truly deserve your pure affections, went to rescue these, yesterday miserable captives, from the darkness of a gloom, to deliver them to the light of a star – freedom (VERDADE, May 6, 1888, our translation).

Shortly before, on April 29, 1888, the *Arauto Parahybano* reported a festive, pro-abolition gathering organized by the Liberal Party, with the presence of those from Paraíba, including some women, who had granted freedom to their slaves:

Mr. Affonso d'Albuquerque Maranhão, 18 freed slaves; Lieutenant Colonel Manoel Fonseca Galvão, 10 freed slaves; Captain Pedro Batista dos Santos, 2 freed slaves; a lady, 2 freed slaves; Pedro Albuquerque Maranhão, 2 freed slaves; Mrs. Isabel Marques, 1 freed slave; Mrs. Getulia Coelho, 1 freed slave (ARAUTO PARAHYBANO, Parahyba do Norte, April 29, 1888, our translation).

Years earlier, on June 22, 1883, the newspaper *O Emancipador* published a note praising

Mrs. D. Ephigenia Lima - mother of Mr. Othon Lima, honorary member of the *Emancipadora*¹⁴, for having on the day of its installation, gratuitously granted freedom to her slave Luiza, and sent it to the Directorate of this society to be delivered by it at the solemn session (EMANCIPADOR, Parahyba do Norte, June 22nd, 1883, our translation).

Luzilá Ferreira also refers to the involvement of women from Pernambuco in favor of emancipation (FERREIRA; ALVES; FONTES, 1999). It is likely that this movement reached Paraíba due to the close ties, often intertwined by family legacies, between the two states. An example of this possible relationship was the *Emancipadora Parahybana*, association, an abolitionist group composed of both men and women, which maintained the *Emancipador*¹⁵ newspaper. Similarly, there was a female abolitionist group in the state of Pernambuco, *Ave Libertas*, with its own statute and a board composed exclusively of women, which in 1885 published its own newspaper of the same name:

¹⁴ It refers to the abolitionist organization *Emancipadora Parahybana*.

¹⁵ The edition of June 22, 1883, makes reference to the first meeting of the *Emancipadora Parahybana* Society on March 25, 1883.

Despite its short lifespan, this small but determined group of ladies occupies a very advantageous place in the gallery of glories of our homeland, imposing itself on the admiration and public consciousness of Pernambuco as an unmistakable necessity and, we dare say, a *sine qua non* noncondition for the abolitionist movement in Brazil (“*Aos escravos*”, AVE LIBERTAS, September 8, 1885, Recife *apud* FERREIRA; ALVES; FONTES, 1999, p. 211, our translation).

The newspaper produced by the women themselves, who referred to themselves as the “*Prometheus Modernas*”(Modern Prometheus), aimed to “save their enslaved brothers,” as stated in an article by Adelaide Porto: “I am an abolitionist, and I will never bow my head before the petty interest that brought us the enslavement of our brothers” (AVE LIBERTAS *apud* FERREIRA; ALVES; FONTES, 1999, p. 215, our translation).

When we discuss women as publishers, we are referring to literate women for whom the debate about education was essential, as women needed to be literate before they could make themselves present in newspapers. Although it was known that they should have this type of competence, the communities of readers and reading traditions would vary according to society. According to Chartier (1999, p. 13, our translation), “texts can be read, and read differently by readers who do not have the same intellectual tools, and who do not maintain the same relationship with the written word.” It was understood that there was difficulty in finding these spaces of female action, given the silence of the archives, as Perrot (2005) asserts, the “gaze of men upon men” leads to the forgetting of women's interests, with the male gaze persisting in the debates (SILVA, 2020, p. 64-65).

These women made the abolitionist cause the path to their emancipation. They appealed to the notion of progress and insisted on the precepts that came from the age of rights and were exposed to the world by the French Revolution. Thus, D. Ernestina Bastos expressed herself in *Ave Libertas* in 1885: “We will liberate the homeland or die in the struggle, embracing the flag of abolition, which is the flag of progress and civilization [...] Let us be the martyrs of the present to be the heroines of the future” (“*Aos escravos*”, AVE LIBERTAS *apud* FERREIRA; ALVES; FONTES, 1999, p. 212, our translation).

Thus, these voices that shared the ideals of the French revolutionaries, well known in the Brazilian atmosphere throughout the 19th century, claimed for women another status, that of subjects of their own emancipation, confirming, along with the *political* principles declared by the French in 1789, freedom and equality, the arguments for the first feminist struggles.

At the end of the 19th century, in the first meeting of the *Sociedade Emancipadora Parahybana*, on March 25, 1883, France was referred to as the homeland of liberty, as per the

Extract from the speech delivered by J. J. E. da Silva and published in the *Emancipador*, newspaper on June 22, 1883: "This revolution [French] will always have great merit in history, for it was soon at its beginning that it first launched into the world the verb of the rights of man and the fiat of freedom."

If Stuart Mill's theory, in *Governo Representativo*, and Mary Wollstonecraft's works, such as "A Vindication of the Rights of Woman," served to introduce the theme of the individual-citizen, and if the example of the women's struggle for the extension of voting rights in the United States of America did not go without praise, it was the French revolutionary imagination that most mobilized the sensibility of these Brazilian publicists at the end of the 19th century, as can be read in Ismênia Maria Duarte Pinheiro's article: "When the French Revolution of 1789 spread its glorious flag to the five winds of the Universe, the woman gave exuberant proof that she was predestined for the great social struggles, for the future of modern democracy" ("O Abolicionismo", *Ave Libertas*, Recife, September 8, 1885 *apud* FERREIRA; ALVES; FONTES, 1999, p. 214, our translation).

Many of these women also associated the fight for women's emancipation with the defense of the Republic. Maria Amélia de Queiroz¹⁶, another participant in the movement, was part of the Clube do Cupim¹⁷, "a secret society founded in the 1880s in Recife, and led by José Mariano¹⁸, which emancipated, defended, and protected the slaves" (VAINSENER, [21--] ¹⁹, our translation). The author spoke out in favor of the captives and against the Monarchy: not many, she affirmed in 1887, believed that "a perverted, anachronistic monarchy, full of vices and miseries, could endure and with impunity introduce into the consciousness of a people degradation and opprobrium, with the aim of ruining its social organism." She concluded her

¹⁶ "The family of Amélia, and she herself, was a real affront to customs. Customs commonly regarded women as the rotten fruit of a basket, wicked, seductive, and more susceptible to the actions of evil. It is worth noting that even though he was the illegitimate son of a priest, father of a dishonored girl, and grandfather of two illegitimate children, Clóvis Beviláqua (Amélia's husband) remained a respected jurist and intellectual. Even while advocating controversial agendas, such as divorce, he was still well-regarded by the society of his class. Therefore, it was upon Amélia that the blame fell for her family being as it was" (SILVA, 2020, p. 86, our translation)

¹⁷ With the abolition in Ceará in 1884, João Ramos, a Maranhense living in Recife, founded the *Clube do Cupim* the same year. It was an underground association that met in various locations and had more than three hundred participants. About this association, see GASPARG, Lúcia. *Clube do Cupim. Pesquisa Escolar Online, Fundação Joaquim Nabuco*, Recife. Available at: <http://basilio.fundaj.gov.br/pesquisaescolar/>. Accessed in: 10 Dec. 2012.

¹⁸ José Mariano Carneiro da Cunha, a graduate of the Faculty of Law of Recife, in the same class as Joaquim Nabuco, in 1870. He founded the newspaper *Província*, and was a member of the *Clube do Cupim* along with Maria Amélia, Leonor Porto, Joaquim Nabuco, Barros Sobrinho, João Ramos, Alfredo Pinto, Praelante da Câmara e Vicente do Café. Ver VAINSENER, Semira Adler. *José Mariano. Pesquisa Escolar Online, Fundação Joaquim Nabuco*, Recife. Available at: <http://basilio.fundaj.gov.br/pesquisaescolar/>. Accessed in: 10 Dec. 2012.

¹⁹ VAINSENER, Semira Adler. *Maria Amélia de Queirós*. (Text extracted from the website of the Women's Secretariat of the State of Pernambuco). [21--]. Available at: www2.secmulher.pe.gov.br/web/secretaria-da-mulher/mulher15. Accessed in: 10 Dec. 2012.

speech once again by associating women's emancipation with the fight for the abolition of slavery and the construction of the Republic:

I come on this opportune occasion to solemnly protest against the inertia, indifference, and discouragement in which women have unfortunately lived in Brazil until today. It is necessary, my dear countrywomen, that women convince themselves once and for all that, it is time to raise a cry of indignation against the ignominious past of so many accursed races. Women are also capable of great and lofty accomplishments. Come! Come, my dear Countrywomen! Let's go! It is our duty to work for the reconstruction of our homeland, in order to later hand down to future generations a freer homeland, enriched with brilliant traditions and glorious achievements (FERREIRA; ALVES; FONTES, 1999, p. 223, our translation).²⁰

After abolition, newspapers celebrated May 13, featuring articles written by the women themselves, such as Aquilina d'Oliveira, who published the poem “*Saudação*”.

Salutation: Hail! May 13!/ Hail! Memorable day, when the sacred cry of Freedom echoed throughout Brazil!/ Hail! Majestic day, when a new sun, casting its life-giving rays on Brazilian soil, dispelled the dreadful darkness in which the unfortunate ones, dubbed captives, were immersed!/ Hail! Oh! Free Brazil!/ The black mantle that enveloped you no longer darkens such a beautiful sky!/ In your lands, that lugubrious word "slavery" no longer finds an echo!/ Hail! For oh! Free Brazil! (ARAUTO PARAHYBANO, Parahyba do Norte, May 20, 1888, our translation)²¹.

The aforementioned “*Anônima paraibana*”, in the same newspaper, praised the emancipatory moment: "I associate myself with you, great fighters, and I dedicate myself to the cause; I associate myself today and greet the goddess who arrives" (“*Liberdade ou Morte*”, *Arauto Parahybano*, Parahyba do Norte, May 20, 1888). By recording her position and her adherence to the movement, the writer-reader possibly seeks to persuade other female readers to participate.

Even after abolition, these women continued writing for newspapers, as they would in the name of the republican cause: “*Avante democratistas e abolicionistas*”, exhorted the poem “*A escravidão*”, by Ignez de Almeida Pessoa, in 1892, “*Avante republicanos corajosos*” (“*Escravidão*”. *Ave Libertas apud* FERREIRA & ALVES & FONTES, 1999, p. 214) Initially guided by the banner of abolition and by the universalism of the rights already defended in the configuration of the new Brazilian state then emerging, women's participation intensified in various associations and periodicals,

²⁰ Conference held by Maria Amélia de Queiroz at the *Teatro de Variedades de Pernambuco*, de Pernambuco, in favor of the redemption of captives, on September 25, 1887 (FERREIRA; ALVES; FONTES, 1999, p. 223).

²¹ “*Saudação*”, signed by Aquilina d'Oliveira, in the newspaper *Arauto Parahybano*, Parahyba do Norte, May 20, 1888.

bringing to public debate the issue of extending citizenship through suffrage (BEZERRIL, 2013, p. 87-88, our translation).

Final considerations

The presented text sought to give visibility to women's writings in newspapers, where they could record their impressions about republican ideas, which, through their writings, could gain adherence from other female readers to the movement they advocated for, since "reading - which rarely leaves marks, and which, by dispersing into a multitude of singular acts, frees itself from all constraints aimed at subjugating it" (CHARTIER, 1999, p. 11, our translation).

Newspapers allow us to understand, throughout the entire debate, how much women were demanding participation in political life and the opportunity to intervene in the construction of the modern society that was being proposed. They wanted to act and intervene in this new society that would emerge with the advent of the Republic, one that needed new paradigms and which they were willing to reconfigure with the construction of this new Woman. "Some dared to take on the responsibility of circumscribing the limits of a new femininity coherent with recent needs, rethinking the social place of motherhood, the role of women in politics, the problem of education, medical fallacies about their bodies and intelligence" (SILVA, 2020, p. 11, our translation).

Based on these discussions, we can reflect on the difficulties of finding sources with the political existence of these women and retracing their paths in these endeavors. "In this sense, and thinking of a Brazil where women did not have the right to inheritance, legal guardianship of children, full access to higher education, or the right to vote, the possibility of writing and making public opinions that would previously be confined to the private world is a demonstration of millenary feminine audacity" (SILVA, 2020, p. 84, our translation). Thus, women's participation in nineteenth-century newspapers shows how these publicists worked with the purpose of emancipating women from patriarchal constraints. The press served them as a platform, a place where it was possible to understand a community of female readers, giving visibility to what they wrote or thought at a certain time and place. Moreover, it allows researchers dealing with this material as an object and/or as a source of research to delve into literate culture.

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About the Authors

Fernanda Daniella de França BEZERRIL

University Federal of Paraíba (UFPB), João Pessoa – PB – Brazil. Doctoral degree candidate in the Graduate Program in Education.

Charlton José dos Santos MACHADO

University Federal of Paraíba (UFPB), João Pessoa – PB – Brazil. Full Professor assigned to the Department of Educational Methodology - DME, in the Center of Education/CE. Doctoral degree in Education (UFRN). CNPq Research Productivity Fellow - Level 1C.

Fabiana SENA

University Federal of Paraíba (UFPB), João Pessoa – PB – Brazil. Associate Professor III, in the Department of Educational Methodology and accredited in the Graduate Program in Education. Doctoral degree in Letters (UFPB).

Isabela Nathália Nunes TRISTÃO

University Federal of Paraíba (UFPB), João Pessoa – PB – Brazil. Doctoral degree candidate in the Graduate Program in Education. FAPESQ/PB Fellow.

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