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**Supplement to a Superficial Education:  
Didacticism and Performance in  
Júlia Lopes de Almeida's *Livro das Noivas* (1896)**

**APPROVED BY  
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

**Supervisor:** \_\_\_\_\_  
Sônia Roncador

\_\_\_\_\_  
César Salgado

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**by**

**Dustin Kenneth Hixenbaugh, B.A. English; B.A. Spanish**

**Report**

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*[H]a em tudo um ponto, ás vezes quasi imperceptivel de belleza, que muitos olhos não vêm, mas que nós, as mulheres, devemos descortinar...*

-- Júlia Lopes de Almeida (“Os Livros”)

## Abstract

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Dustin Kenneth Hixenbaugh, M.A.

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Supervisor: Sônia Roncador

The most prolific woman writer of *belle époque* Brazil, Júlia Lopes de Almeida is remembered chiefly for her proto-feminist novels like *A Falência* (1901). This essay extends critical analysis to the heretofore overlooked *Livro das Noivas* (1896), a domestic manual once reprimanded by Jeffrey Needell as counterproductive to the feminist cause. With theoretical references to Genette, Agamben, Butler, Woolf, Ludmer, and others, it contextualizes *Noivas* within late 19th-century discourse on women's education and the tradition of conduct literature, ultimately determining that Almeida subverts the conventions of the latter in defense of the former. Like João Luso, who declared *Noivas* a “curso” for soon-to-be-married women, this essay reads the book as a remedial addendum to the superficial education that left women unprepared to confront what Almeida and her

liberal contemporaries deemed their responsibility to ensure the nation's future by supplying it educated and healthy sons. In a deep analysis of the author's extended dedication to her husband, Filinto, this essay moreover redresses Needell's division of *Noivas* from Almeida's novels. Rather than an aberration, the manual is a companion piece to the author's fictional corpus. As a performative dissimulation of moral femininity, it compensates for Almeida's unorthodox and, for the time, questionably "feminine" career.

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## Supplement to a Superficial Education:

### Didacticism and Performance in

#### Júlia Lopes de Almeida's *Livro das Noivas* (1896)

##### FEMININE MORALITY AND THE 19TH-CENTURY CONDUCT MANUAL

For a career that spanned five decades, from her début as a theater critic in 1881<sup>1</sup> to her death in 1934, Júlia Lopes de Almeida was Brazil's premier woman writer. Since the recent republication of several of her novels, scholars have battled what Cátia Toledo Mendonça calls the century of "crítica falocêntrica" that has hushed 19th-century Brazil's foremost female voice (275). Crucial as this scholarship has been, however, with few exceptions<sup>2</sup> it has confined itself to Almeida's fiction, leaving under-studied the *crônicas*, essays, plays and other texts that comprise the bulk of the more than thirty volumes she published in her lifetime. In this essay, I extend the critical conversation to one of the author's most commercially viable yet undervalued nonfiction collections, the *Livro das Noivas* (1896). Despite historian Jeffrey Needell's repudiation of it as a feminine manual whose lessons counteract the feminist consciousness burgeoning in *fin-de-siècle* Brazil, I discern in the book traces of a progressive didactic project (136). More than an etiquette manuel, *Noivas* strives to compensate for the inadequate education inflicted upon its readers; it enrolls Brazilian women in what the author considers a much-needed course in how to think. With relevant detours into the history of conduct genre, anecdotes from the author's life, and close attention to the book's extended dedication and several key *crônicas*, I propose we re-read the collection as not just a piece of conduct literature but as a



companion to Almeida's proto-feminist novels and consistent with her life-long project to educate female readers into ideal wives, mothers and *donas de casa*.

In "Escritoras, Escritas, Escrituras" (1997), Norma Telles situates Almeida within a larger portrait of pioneering Brazilian women. What she calls the "século do romance," the 19th century, is marked by a dramatic increase in female literacy, at least in cities, that led middle-class, urban women to rapidly become the primary audience for newspapers and novels (102). This late-century boom in female literacy succeeded the previous boom in male literacy that had accompanied the court's establishment in 1808 and the consequent Europeanization and *embourgeoisement* of Rio de Janeiro (Rainho 139). We should take care to note, however, that improved literacy was predominantly an urban and middle-class phenomenon, and that although publishers turned new attention to women readers, men remained more consistently literate: The 1890 census, for example, records a 43.8% literacy rate for Rio de Janeiro's women (up from 29.3% in 1870) in contrast to 57.9% for the city's men (up from 41.2% in 1870) (Hahner, *Emancipating* 22). Under such circumstances, expanded literacy is not an emphatic achievement: Many women read primarily to perform their family's good breeding or because they had little else to do. And as Almeida laments in *Noivas*, the "novellas prejudiciales" women did read made them complacent rather than ready to accept roles of social importance (36). Moreover, basic literacy, unaccompanied by lessons in taste, history, civic duty and critical thought, was ordinarily the extent of the education women would receive. In consequence, Renata Wasserman writes in *Central at the Margin* (2007), women's

“conversation was dull and they contributed nothing to the intellectual life -- such as it was -- of family or country” (17). Trailblazers like Nísia Floresta Brasileira Augusta, who published a loose translation of Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* in 1832, endeavored to unite the powers of the press and increased literacy to develop a national women’s movement but succeeded instead in eliciting conservative scorn. By the 1870s, women like Joana Paula Mando de Noronha<sup>3</sup>, Violante Atabalipa Ximenes de Bivar e Bellasco<sup>4</sup>, Francisca Senhorinha da Motta Diniz<sup>5</sup>, and Amélia Carolina de Silva Couto<sup>6</sup> had established enough female-run presses to form “uma rede” in Brazil, “de norte a sul” (Telles 426); however, whether these women were aware of each other is unclear. As June E. Hahner explains, geographical and social fragmentation too often left women to write from scratch and in a vacuum: “Only toward the end of the nineteenth century would the number of women editing or writing for such newspapers be sufficiently large for mutual support and intellectual interchange” (“Nineteenth” 262).

Between 1896 and 1926, Almeida’s *Noivas* was republished four times, making it one of the author’s most popular books<sup>7</sup>. It is comprised of twenty-nine short essays and creative sketches, parceled into three sections that correspond, roughly, to advice for women soon to be wed, advice for women newly wed, and advice for new mothers. These *crônicas*, a few of which we shall explore at length in this essay’s final section, were published independently in women’s journals before their eventual assembly into the present volume. To the extent that these supply middle-class women advice on quotidian matters like how to modestly decorate their bedrooms or how to ensure their children’s linens are

laundered in sanitary water, *Noivas* indeed warrants Needell's decision to read the book within the tradition of 19th-century conduct literature, a genre more often derided for its history as a "disciplinary practice" than as a discourse of potentially emancipatory significance (González Stephan 388). Maria do Carmo Teixeira Rainho dates the first modern conduct manual to Erasmus's *Civilitate Morum Puerilium*, printed circa 1530, though like the court the conduct genre only traveled to Brazil after its popularity had peaked and declined in Europe (142). For Rainho, implicit in all etiquette literature is the tension between one's social position and the (higher) social position to which one aspires: "Cada emprego da palavra, cada definição da noção reflete uma estratégia que é também representação das relações sociais" (140). Intended to aid male, non-aristocratic youths in their climb up the social ladder, the *Civilitate* provides the template that later manuals (those geared toward women in particular) would commandeer to "instill in every individual an adequate dose of fear of possible exclusion or discrimination" (González Stephan 389). The first conduct manuals were directed to men for whom, thanks to Louis XIV of France's revisions to court culture, access to aristocratic privilege came to depend upon the public performance of accepted aristocratic behaviors (Schwarcz 121). As the lessons dispersed in these conduct manuals became naturalized into common sense, their prescriptions transferred from their initial purpose to police the border between elites and non-elites to their new, broader purpose to differentiate civility from barbarism; as Rainho points out, not until the late 18th century did *polite* and *civilized* become synonymous terms (144). And as the 19th century sped toward the 20th, it was newly-literate women

who increasingly came to shoulder the burden for demonstrating their family's civility. This, too, occurred first in Europe. Yet in either place, conduct books reveal "a culture in the process of rethinking at the most basic level dominant (aristocratic) rules for sexual exchange" -- a process that ultimately concerned itself more with the circumscription of women's than men's behaviors (Armstrong 97). By the time Brazil's middle-class women learned to read, the guidelines that had "established a private economy [for women] apart from the forms of rivalry and dependency that organized the world of men" had become so pervasive, so mistaken for common sense, that writers of novels and revised behavior manuals could take them for granted (Armstrong 113), and by the time Almeida printed *Noivas*, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz remarks in *The Emperor's Beard* (1998), "etiquette books were sold by the thousands in the streets [of Rio de Janeiro] and heavily advertised in newspapers" (152). For Almeida to assemble an apparent etiquette manual not only reinforced her feminine public persona; it made good business sense.

In "On Citizenship: The Grammatology of the Body-Politic" (2004), a bleak set of notes on conduct literature, which she considers part and parcel with other regulatory mechanisms like constitutions, catechisms and dictionaries, Beatriz González Stephan contends that without exception etiquette manuals endeavor to reproduce the dominant culture by inserting its values, in particular its self-congratulatory definition of *civility*, into private citizens' homes: "Although constitutions rule public aspects and the official dimension of civil life, manuals will act upon the physical body of the individual, and particularly on the private and familiar spaces, with their countless behavioral and hy-

genic rules,” she explains. “Norms -- which control even the slightest insinuation of body, sight, desires, any inopportune emotion or word -- penetrate homes through the school and the press, and are installed with subtlety and perseverance, not only in the core of the family or the workplace, but also in the intimacy of the individual” (392). As I shall explain shortly, I believe González Stephan, like Needell, prematurely forecloses the potential for the subversion of, or at least the inclusion of a resistant sensibility within, the etiquette manual’s conventions. Nevertheless, that the genre is implicated in the transference and perpetuation of the state’s values remains an inescapable fact. In “The Rise of the Domestic Woman” (1987), Nancy Armstrong writes, for example, that in conduct manuals directed toward women, appeals to the reader’s desire for social and economic ascension, a consistent trope since Erasmus’s *Civilitate*, resurface as moral imperatives; Their authors “took labor and leisure off their separate conceptual planes and placed them in a moral continuum” (114). In other words, etiquette literature construes a woman’s denial of physical and material desire -- a private self-denial that promotes the public’s perception of her family as economically successful -- as a hallmark of feminine virtue.

In Brazil, the conviction that virtuous women contributed to their families’ social and financial welfare only from concealed, regulated perches inside their homes remained prevalent well into the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Despite the inroads achieved by the scattered feminist presses described above, it was into a culture that perceived authorship an inherently masculine act that Almeida launched her unorthodox public career. In a nation that made sense of itself through binarisms (male/female, public/private, etc.), a

woman writer was considered unnatural, an oxymoron; in a nation that yet assigned responsibility for the preservation and exhibition of the family's morality to women, a woman writer -- traitor to her sex and usurper of masculine privilege -- faced the accusation that she had abandoned her family to immorality and that she, too, was immoral. Perhaps the itch to confirm her own morality provides one explanation for Almeida's assembly, in 1896, of a manual for feminine conduct: If, as we have seen, it is a virtuous woman who reads (and therefore presumably lives) the rules set forth in conduct literature, must not a woman who *writes* that literature also be virtuous? Indeed, because critics refused to dissociate perceptions of women's lives from evaluations of their works, early female artists like Almeida acquiesced to what Ana Helena Cizotto Belline calls the virtuous lady-writer archetype, "[a]pontando-se as altas qualidades morais de filhas, mães e esposas, não separando a obra da vida pessoal" (44-5). Of all the double standards women writers confronted, perhaps the most nefarious was that which insisted their gender conformity and unimpeachable moral comportment determine the quality of their literary corpus, a subordination of skill to biography not applied to men in equal measure. Of course, Virginia Woolf reminds us this is not a phenomenon unique to Brazil. Frances Burney, the "mother of English fiction," may have shown a woman's literary aspiration need not necessarily contradict her respectability, "but the burden of proof still rested anew upon each authoress" (69). As she writes in "Women Novelists" (1918), to require women to balance the public's standards for their "moral purity" with their creative vision unjustly complicates the already arduous artistic process and exposes them to a superfluous, ty-

rannical criticism from which men shelter themselves (70). Specific to the Brazilian context, Telles explains, “Demônio ou bruxa, anjo ou fada, [a mulher] é mediadora entre o artista e o desconhecido, instruindo-o em degradação ou exalando pureza. É musa ou criatura, nunca criadora” (403). From either side of the Atlantic, Woolf and Telles arrive at the same conclusion: Where femininity and morality are conflated, women may inspire and consume -- but only under extraordinary circumstances ever create -- literature.

By the first decade of the 20th century, when Almeida’s popularity hit its stride, patriarchal biases that viewed in female authorship crimes against nature had softened but nevertheless remained prevalent. We witness their vestiges, for example, in “As Três Júlias,” a 1907 article in which Lúcio de Mendonça declares Júlia Lopes de Almeida, Júlia Cortines and Francisca Júlia Brazil’s three finest women writers, conveniently allied by a common name. Despite his ostensible focus on their works’ caliber, Mendonça first feels obligated to exculpate these three women’s gender-defiant literary careers. “É observação antiga que em cada escriptora perde a humanidade uma mulher,” he writes. To the skeptical reader inclined to rebuke Almeida’s “varonilidade do espirito,” he reassures: Almeida is “uma perfeita mãe da familia” (247). In this, Mendonça soothes in earnest exactly the masculine hysteria later parodied by Roland Barthes in “Novels and Children” (1957): “Let women acquire self-confidence,” Barthes proclaims. “[T]hey can very well have access, like men, to the superior status of creation. But let men be quickly reassured: women will not be taken from them for all that, they will remain no less available for motherhood by nature” (51). That Mendonça’s comments may reveal more Almeida’s

care to appear to conform to society's expectations than a naked look into her personal values is a matter to which we shall soon return. For now, suffice it to say, for Mendonça (as presumably for additional male peers) Almeida's apparent robust motherliness overrides or at least wins an amount of lenience toward her unladylike literary and intellectual efforts. Similarly, her credible foray into that most moral of literary genres -- the ladies' conduct manual, "que só uma boa mãe de familia era capaz de ter escrito" (247) -- sanctions, perhaps compensates for her questionably feminine fictional enterprises.

Lúcio de Mendonça's praise for *Noivas*, inseparable from his praise for Almeida's motherliness, returns us to Needell's devaluation of even the book's artistic merits based solely on its genre affiliation. We must revisit, in particular, his claim in the otherwise superb *A Tropical Belle-Époque: Elite Culture and Society in Turn-of-the-Century Rio de Janeiro* (1987) that Almeida was lucky *Noivas* "was apparently disregarded in [her] contemporary appraisal" lest it tarnish her peers' opinion of her talent (212). In fact, journalism printed in Almeida's lifetime and unearthed recently<sup>8</sup> reveals that her peers not only read *Noivas* but found it commendable. Mendonça's column is but one example: In the *crônica* "Intellectualidade Feminina Brasileira" (1898), Pelayo Serrano names Almeida Brazil's "mais conspicua" woman novelist, distinguished by *A Família Medeiros* (1891) and *A Viúva Simões* (1895), "não falando dos *Traços e Illuminuras* [e] do adorável *Livro das Noivas*" (105). This appeared in *A Mensageira*, a feminist literary magazine to which Almeida also contributed. In the later issue dedicated to Almeida, the magazine reprinted reflections by Guiomar Torrezão, a recently-deceased Portuguese writer who had sub-



mitted her work to Brazilian periodicals and known Almeida personally. She declares *Medeiros* the author's "obra prima" but praises *Noivas*, which she calls a "deliciosa selecção de conselhos, indicações e lições femininas, de um grande alcance moral e economico, como só poderia deslizar em desartificiosa palestra intima da fina penna de uma mulher, para mais realçada por edição luxuosa, artisticamente ilustrada" (101). Torrezão's attention to *Noivas*' didactic and moral virtues anticipates the response of later commentator and family friend João Luso (247). When Almeida died, Luso composed several essays in her praise. In perhaps the first of these, he reviews a handful of her early books, before long determining that "em cada um relacionado com os outros melhor se revelam, se confirmam e se dirigem para uma forma geral de perfeição" (365). He commends *Noivas*' didactic value, superior to that of Almeida's novels because its lessons derive from the author's own life. For him, the book constitutes a veritable "curso" in which its readers learn to follow in Almeida's footsteps. "[A] sua propria vida," he says, "é a melhor lição" (369). These and other favorable critical mentions prove the "disregard" Needell alleges is a phenomenon unique to the present period of her recovery; for we of the late-20th and early-21st centuries are well-trained to eschew the behavioral prescriptions that define the conduct genre and are no longer perplexed by what once seemed the inherent and contradictory oddity of a woman who happens also to be a novelist.

### **“MEU FILINTO”: PERFORMATIVE DIMENSIONS OF THE *NOIVAS* DEDICATION**

Many scholars have commented on the relationship between Filinto and Júlia Lopes de Almeida. For sure, their romance has a certain cinematic charm. Rosane Saint-Denis Salomoni dates it to a chance encounter at a literary assembly in 1885 (23), though Peggy Sharpe, who has interviewed descendents and family friends, speculates the lovers likely met earlier, for before then Júlia had contributed to *A Semana*, the literary journal Filinto and Valentim Magalhães had operated since 1886 (“Júlia” 192; Menezes 20). Whatever its spark, the relationship was so unfavored by Júlia’s parents they contrived an extended family visit to Portugal in an attempt to impede it. The sojourn was interrupted by the surprise appearance of Filinto, freshly confident after the publication of his first collection of poetry, *Lyrica* (1887), which he had consecrated to “JL.” Like any paratext, a book’s dedication is always functional -- it is, as Gérard Genette explains in *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation* (1987), “a discourse that is fundamentally heteronomous, auxiliary, and dedicated to the service of something other than itself that constitutes its *raison d’être*” (12) -- and this seems expressly true for *Lyrica*’s baldly entitled prefatory poem “Dedicatoria.” A thinly-veiled admission of passion and courtly service, the poem affirms the poet’s monogamous desire<sup>9</sup> and marks the inaugural appearance of four verses that would accrue especial importance for Filinto and Júlia over the course of their more than forty years together:

As nossas almas já

Se uniram de tal sorte,

Que nem a propria morte

Nol-as desunirá (10).

Two souls, presumably equal, united as one. The “Dedicatoria,” which transforms *Lyrica* from merely assembled poems into a demonstration of marriageability, achieved its function: Júlia’s parents relented, and she wed Filinto in Lisbon’s Igreja de São Domingos later the same year (Sharpe, “Júlia” 192). The transference of Júlia’s moral allegiances, from father to husband, is chronicled in *Traços e Illuminuras* (1887), the collection of short fiction she published before her return to Brazil. While the bulk of the volume she dedicates to her parents, the last five stories, like the last months of 1887 (and all to come afterward), she dedicates instead to Filinto.

That the four verses excerpted above carried especial resonance, at least for Júlia, we deduce from their prominent reappearance a decade later in *Noivas*. Plucked from the center of “Dedicatoria,” these verses head and lend the illusion of marital dialogue to the extended epistolary dedication that in turn heads *Noivas*. Since their marriage, Júlia’s unorthodox literary career had flourished to the unexpected point that it overshadowed her husband’s; in ten years, she had published multiple novels and other volumes, including *Contos Infantis*, which had been reissued and adopted for use in schools on both sides of the Atlantic, not to mention the bevy of uncollected *crônicas* scholars continue to recover, while Filinto added to his name only *crônicas* and the one-act comedy *O Defunto* (1894). How Júlia became, in Sharpe’s words, such a marketable “voz de ruptura” despite the obstacles her sex presented her is, of course, a question many scholars have asked. The con-

sensus is that hers was an unconventional career enabled by an even mixture of talent, providence, relative material comfort, the savvy negotiation of personae, and the authorization she received from what society perceived the key male in her life, her husband. About this last point, Elódia Xavier writes, “O fato de ser casada com Filinto de Almeida, escritor português, e de pertencer a uma família de intelectuais contribuiu, sem dúvida, para lhe abrir os caminhos até então praticamente interditos à mulher” (iv). As the extended *Noivas* dedication makes clear, Almeida must have realized the support she enjoyed from her husband was uncommon. “Meu Filinto,” the dedication begins,

Lês na minh’alma como em um livro aberto. Não tenho pensamento que te não communique, desejo ou sonho que te não exprima. Ninguem, pois, melhor que tu, conhecerá a sinceridade d’estas paginas singelas, onde de vez em quando os nossos filhos aparecem, e que te entrego, certa de que serão queridas ao teu coração.

Não te dou um livro litterario, mas dou-te um livro sentido, a que segredei todas as minhas alegrias e tristezas.

Tu, que tens, com equal carinho e bom conselho, participado de umas e de outras, acolhe-o bem, que vae nelle todo o amor da tua

Julia (6).

At its most basic level, the dedication indicates Júlia’s personal and professional indebtedness to Filinto. The second sentence (“Não tenho pensamento...”) matches in syntax, if not in tone, the title and first line of “Não Posso Ter uma Abstracção...”, the *crônica* she

would later publish in *Eles e Elas* (1910). However, whereas the latter text characterizes a woman's infiltrated mental privacy as a form of psychological terrorism<sup>10</sup>, in the *Noivas* dedication Júlia surrenders her *pensamentos* freely. In fact, to the extent that they convey commitment, even subservience, her words rehash exactly what Filinto had stated in *Lyrice*, ten years earlier. The dedication makes conspicuous the permission Júlia has received from him to exercise what Lúcio de Mendonça would later call her "indole máscula," no matter its inconsistency with her traditional female duties (247). Thus the dedication accomplishes not only its basic illocutionary function (to dedicate the book) but also the greater purpose for which Genette says dedications were invented: It solicits then advertizes a benefactor's protection (118). In doing so, Júlia straddles the delineation Genette draws between "private" and "public" dedications (131). Obviously, the author knows Filinto privately; her epistle intimates the experiences and other people -- their children -- they have known shielded from public scrutiny. However, because Filinto is a prominent public figure and because Júlia particularizes the intellectual nature of their collaboration ("Tu, que tens, com igual carinho e bom conselho...") the dedication bleeds into the public. To an extent, Genette says, all dedications carry certain "ambiguity" about their destination: They are "always intended for at least two addresses: the dedicatee as well as the reader, for dedicating the work is a public act that the reader is, as it were, called on to witness" (134). In the case of Filinto's *Lyrice*, the dedication is directed first toward Júlia, second toward other readers upon whom he calls to witness his confession of love (i.e. Júlia's parents). In *Noivas*, the dedication directly addresses

Filinto but also recruits as witnesses readers who may question the distribution of power in the Almeida household. The dedication indicates that the benefactor's protection is not unlimited, that Júlia's opinions in *Noivas* have been sanctioned, even censored by the respected Filinto, thereby assuring their harmlessness and compliance with social norms.

The association Genette discerns between an author, the act of dedication, and the desire for witnesses is, for *Noivas*, key. In Latin, Giorgio Agamben instructs us in *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive* (1999), the word *auctor*, from which we inherit *author* as well as *authority*, “originally designates the person who intervenes in the case of a minor (or the person who, for whatever reason, does not have the capacity to posit a legally valid act), in order to grant him [or her] the valid title that he [or she] requires” (148). Insofar as Filinto has provided Júlia “bom conselho” and consented to *Noivas*' publication, he is the text's true *auctor*. Readers are invited to assume that textual elements that deviate from expectations for moral feminine conduct are, in fact, Filinto's own. Otherwise, why would he have authorized them? Júlia's dedication informs the reader of a spousal alliance founded upon more than private interaction; it “proclaims a relationship, whether intellectual or personal, actual or symbolic,” while simultaneously conjuring the protection and authority inherent in that alliance (Genette 135). In its early phases, Agamben continues, *auctor* also signified what we now call a *witness* (148). For him, a witness is a particular authority summoned to provide testimony, to validate the “reality and force” of another person's experience, and thus to resolve disputes between conflicted parties (150). Because he is her husband, Filinto indeed bears witness to Júlia's

private comportment. But let us not neglect Genette's observation, above, that in dedications an author addresses twin audiences -- the dedicatee and, crucially, the reader. Unlike Michel Foucault's archive, which examines what is and is not said, Agamben's notion of witness testimony examines the conditions in which discourse is or is not *able* to be said. Júlia's impulse to document her husband's advance permission for *Noivas*, itself documentation of 19th-century Brazil's apprehension toward the woman writer, locates her at the border between the "sayable and unsayable" (145). If it is true that in the dedication Júlia necessarily calls upon readers to witness, may it not also be true that she calls upon them to testify? To validate to nonreaders the terms under which her efforts have secured protection? *Auctoritas*, it seems, is exercised not only by Filinto but also by readers like Lúcio de Mendonca and even Needell, who concedes that the *Noivas* dedication "make[s] patent the [spouses'] extraordinary mutual support and creativity, though D. Júlia still subordinated her literary interests to her role as wife and mother" (214). As witnesses, Filinto as well as Júlia's readers finalize the essential "act of an incapable person, giving strength of proof to what in itself lacks it and granting life to what could not live alone" (Agamben 150).

Also notable in the dedication is Júlia's insistence that despite having benefitted from a man's "bom conselho" *Noivas* remains a collection of "alegrias e tristezas" -- "um livro sentido," compared to "um livro litterario." This assertion, which undermines the book's creative merit, reveals an author aware of her precarious perch between public and private, moral and immoral, male and female, sayable and unsayable, and it removes her

from competition with the male contemporaries who, as Cátia Toledo Mendonça reminds us, received the lion's share of the critical attention. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar understand similar expressions of perhaps insincere feminine humility in the British and English American traditions in terms of the relinquished phallus: "Until the end of the nineteenth century," they write, "the woman writer really was supposed to take second place to her literary brothers and fathers. If she refused to be modest, self-deprecating, subservient, refused to present her artistic productions as mere trifles designed to divert and distract readers in moments of idleness, she could expect to be ignored or (sometimes scurrilously) attacked" (61-2). Thus the female artist expressly rejects the phallus; she "denies that there is a contest over a common object of desire" (73). In particular, the *Noivas* dedication removes Júlia from real or imagined competition with her own husband; it underlines Filinto's approval of his wife's literary pursuits, Júlia's submission of her own career to his, and, ultimately, the couple's united front. Whether these sentiments are indeed performative, as I shall argue below, or whether Filinto was indeed Júlia's "primeiro leitor" to the extent that he censored her works, we may never know (Rio 33).

We do know, however, that feigned humility is not without precedent, even within the Latin American context. In the well-known letter Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz addressed to "Sor Filotea", the pen-name adopted by Manuel Fernández de Santa Cruz, then the Bishop of Puebla, the Mexican nun defends her involvement in public, secular letters despite accusations that such activity was "not only indecorous but sinful" for women, for nuns in particular (Leonard 179). Like Júlia Lopes de Almeida, Sor Juana expresses dis-



may at a patriarchal order that withholds education from women. “Teniendo yo después como seis o siete años, y sabiendo ya leer y escribir,” she recounts, “empecé a matar a mi madre con instantes e importunios ruegos sobre que, mudándome el traje, me enviase a Méjico, en casa de unos deudos que tenía, para estudiar y cursar la Universidad” (830). Thwarted, she turned to the books left behind by her grandfather; and thus began the solitary, life-long auto-didacticism for which we remember her today. In the response to “Sor Filotea,” Josefina Ludmer discerns two “tretas del débil” that she believes breathe resistance into Sor Juana’s confessional rhetoric. The first of these is the distinction the author draws between the fields of knowledge and speech: “Decir que no se sabe, no saber decir, no decir que sabe, saber sobre el no decir.” In Sor Juana’s case, Ludmer continues, “[l]a ignorancia es, pues, una relación social determinada transferida al discurso: Juana no sabe decir en posición de subalternidad” (48). Like Almeida’s dedication, which as we have seen is addressed explicitly to Filinto but implicitly to her readers, Sor Juana’s letter keeps two audiences in mind. To the letter’s immediate recipient, the Bishop of Puebla, she repeats she is but an uneducated woman; she claims she knows not what to say. The same for her implicit audience, the New Spanish Archbishop, certain to read the letter once it is published; in matters of theology, she can only say what she cannot know. Of course, protestations of humility comprise only part of her missive; for a woman who insists she does not know what to say, Sor Juana says an awful lot.

Ludmer confines her comments to Sor Juana’s letter, but her “tretas” framework also illuminates the rhetoric upon which Almeida constructs her self-presentation, in *Noi-*

vas and elsewhere, as the “protótipo da esposa, dona de casa e figura maternal” (Sharpe, “Caminho” 17). Consider, for example, her denial in an interview with João do Rio of her time spent reading: “Sou de muito pouco leitura. Era capaz de passar a vida lendo, mas uma dona de casa não pode perder tanto tempo” (34) -- a declaration that for Sharpe reveals Almeida’s “perfeita consciência de uma certa tensão que circunda o duplo papel por ela desempenhado” (“Júlia” 205). We know from other statements even within the same interview that in fact Almeida prided her familiarity with esteemed European masters like Dante, Guy de Maupassant, Jules Michelet, and Émile Zola. And in *crônicas* like “Os Livros” and “As Aves,” both united in *Noivas*, she would even recommend certain authors and texts she believes all Brazilian women should study. More than an expression of commitment to her conventional duties as “dona de casa,” then, her statements convey an implicit criticism of the social order that sees being a woman and being informed about literature as mutually exclusive qualities. It is, to repeat Ludmer’s classification, an example of “no saber decir”: At once, she conforms to and resists the role society has predetermined for her. Her wry or deferential commentary forces upon Brazilian readers a not-quite-invisible tension that, as Judith Butler explains in *Gender Trouble* (1990), engages in transformational work insofar as it exposes “the contingent acts that create the appearance of a naturalistic necessity” and “admits of possibilities that have been forcibly foreclosed by the various reifications of gender that have constituted its contingent ontologies” (45-6). In other words, Almeida’s mother-writer persona should be understood as a tactical decision that lends the illusion of gender conformity to her actions but, by de-

monstrating that women can both be feminine and write books, simultaneously contests the erstwhile patriarchal notion that the two occupations are irreconcilable.

Indeed, the importance of Almeida's mother-writer persona cannot be overstated, though it is, as we have seen, the product of a complex matrix of performances. In Latin America, Ludmer continues, there is a tradition ("una literatura propia") of marginalized voices co-opted by the comparatively empowered:

Desde la literatura gauchesca en adelante, pasando por el indigenismo y los diversos avatares del regionalismo, se trata del gesto ficticio de dar la palabra al definido por alguna carencia (sin tierra, sin escritura), de sacar a luz su lenguaje particular. Ese gesto proviene de la cultura superior y está a cargo del letrado, que disfraza y muda su voz en la ficción de la transcripción, para proponer al débil y subalterno una alianza contra el enemigo común (51).

The immediate "gesto ficticio" she references is Fernández de Santa Cruz's adoption of a female voice ("Sor Filotea") and publication of his and Sor Juana's correspondence, an act Ludmer believes was intended to convey solidarity between Fernández de Santa Cruz and nuns everywhere, who jointly denounce Sor Juana's behavior. For Agamben, Fernández's impersonation would too be a testimonial act, for even its disingenuous or corrupted claim to authority makes evident the "empty place of the subject" (145). Applied to *Noivas*, Ludmer's remarks unveil an unexpected circumstance: From the "tretas" perspective, it is not the voice of the subaltern (Júlia Lopes de Almeida) that has been appropriated but rather that of the dominant culture (Filinto). For example, when Almeida says, "Ninguem,

pois, melhor que tu, conhecerá a sinceridade d'estas paginas singelas," she implies the extension: "And yet you have authorized me to print them." Yet for all our speculation about the authority and protection provided to Júlia by Filinto, there is not, in *Noivas*, any instance in which Filinto corroborates. In the manual's dedication, his lone contribution is paratextual: four verses from *Lyrical*, excerpted above, that emphasize the eternal unity of the couple's souls. Has Filinto indeed provided explicit *auctoritas* for Júlia's career? Or has he been ventriloquized by her? Either way, the basic fact remains: She considers it necessary to assure readers her career is sanctioned by her husband; she draws agency from fashioning herself in the public's view as more "débil" than she is. It is not to us, her readers -- but to Filinto -- that Júlia's soul is "um livro aberto." What discrepancy exists between what she experiences, at home, with Filinto, and what she says, in *Noivas*, to us?

Whatever the answer to these questions, we may deduce that Júlia knew very well that her social acceptance and her books' marketability depended on the public's perception of her home behavior, and that that perception could best be shaped by the real or imagined testimony of her husband. Of course, what we know of Filinto de Almeida from other sources confirms that he endorsed, even relished, his wife's literary eminence. In the aforementioned interview with João do Rio, which is ostensibly an interview of Júlia and Filinto despite its clear emphasis upon the former, Rio remarks, "Há muito gente que considera D. Júlia o primeiro romancista brasileiro" (33; my emphasis). Inherent in Rio's statement is, I believe, an incredulity not far removed from Lúcio de Mendonça's about the compatibility of femininity and authorship: Has he sincerely complimented what he

considers Júlia's transcendence of her minority status as a woman writer? Or do his gendered adjectives betray his culture's inability to reconcile her (masculine) career and her (feminine) persona as mother *par excellence*? "Pois," Filinto replies, "não é? Nunca disse isso a ninguém, mas há muito que o penso. Não era eu quem devia estar na Academia, era ela" (33)<sup>11</sup>. At this point in the interview, Rio interjects:

Esse sentimento de mútua admiração é um dos encantos daquele lar. Filinto esquece os seus versos e pensa nos romances da esposa. Leva-a a certos trechos da cidade para observar o meio onde se desenvolverão as cenas futuras, é o seu primeiro leitor, ajuda-a com um respeito forte e másculo. D. Júlia ama os versos do esposo, quer que ele continue a escrever, coordena o volume prestes a entrar no prelo. E ambos, nessa serena amizade, feita de amor e de respeito, envolvem os filhos numa suave atmosfera de bondade (33).

Conspicuous, here, is that Rio declares Júlia's and Filinto's admiration "mútua" but not their involvement in each other's composition process. Filinto chaperones Júlia when she researches her fiction and supplies her "forte e másculo" feedback, presumably before she seeks publication. Conversely, Júlia's interference in Filinto's work is minimized; her involvement is limited to the conventionally feminine (she provides her husband unconditional love and encouragement) and the secretarial (she prepares his manuscripts for press). Does Rio accurately capture the balance of power in the Almeidas' working relationship? The two spouses' comments conflict. Asked which of her novels she prefers, Júlia demurs. "[É] *A Casa Verde*," she concludes, "porque foi escrito de colaboração com

meu marido.” Filinto intervenes, elaborating the structure of that collaboration: “Imagina eu fazendo romances! Era porque ela queria. Também só me sentava à mesa depois que me dizia: tem que fazer um capítulo hoje com estes personagens, dando-lhe este desenvolvimento” (37). Júlia smiles. Has Filinto revealed that she in fact held the upper hand in their joint literary venture? Or do they express a benevolent spousal deference? The veracity of her maternal persona under scrutiny, Júlia neither confirms nor denies.

It is striking that, in an ostensibly *joint* interview, Rio has the chance to privately address Filinto: His interjection, above, interrupts the interview transcript just as Júlia had interrupted the actual interview when beckoned, by their daughter Margarida, to attend her brother Albano. Even if we assume Margarida’s summon was unrehearsed, not staged, it offers Júlia the rich opportunity to perform, for a contemporary writer (and his audience), her motherliness. “Vou ver o Albano, coitadinho,” she says, “Já não o vejo há muito tempo” (33). In this episode, which records Júlia’s behavior in private as identical to her self-presentation in public, Júlia exactly enacts the conduct Barthes prescribes, satirically, to women writers: “Love, work, write, be business-women or women of letters,” he says, “but always remember that man exists, and that you are not made like him; your order is free on condition that it depends on his; your freedom is a luxury, it is possible only if you first acknowledge the obligations of your nature” (51). Thus it must be Júlia, not Filinto, who rises to resolve their son Albano’s mishap. The scene coincides with Virginia Woolf’s observations, in *A Room of One’s Own* (1929), that early women writers were too often compelled, partly because of the burden of their duties as wives, mothers, and over-

seers of servants, to compose their works in the “general sitting room, subject to all kinds of interruptions” (66); as well as with the American writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s reflection that although the “home does provide some privacy for the family as a lump,” the “mother -- poor invaded soul -- finds even the bathroom door no bar to hammering little hands. From parlour to kitchen, from cellar to garret, she is at the mercy of children, servants, tradesmen, and callers” (39-40). The extraordinary support Júlia enjoyed from Filinto, compounded by their material comfort -- Rio compliments the Almeidas’ “*cottage* admiravel, construído entre as árvores seculares da estrada de Santa Teresa” (30) -- reduced the number of interruptions into Júlia’s private composition process but, as we see, did not remove them entirely. As João Luso would recall after her death, she “aprendeu ao mesmo tempo, e sem que propriamente precisasse de mestres, a dirigir uma pena e a afagar os cabelos duma criança” (366). Like Jane Austen, then, Júlia earns membership in the very select club of 18th- and 19th-century women writers who, somehow, unraveled literary careers without the now-proverbial rooms of their own.

Like the dedication in *Noivas*, the interview with João do Rio showcases the “sutil ironia almeidiana” that Sharpe deems “um mecanismo de defesa que efetivamente suaviza as tensões causadas não apenas por sua postura enquanto profissional da escrita, mas também pelos papéis mutuamente exclusivos por ela desempenhados em sua vida pessoal e profissional: os de esposa/mãe/administradora do lar e os de artista/escritora” (“Caminho” 18). Júlia’s tactical public persona, which we have already explored from a number of perspectives, operates, in Butler’s words, as a form of “gender border control” insofar

as it adopts “acts, gestures, [and] enactments” that “are *performative* in the sense that the essence or identity they otherwise propose to express are *fabrications* manufactured and sustained through corporeal signs and other discursive means” (her emphasis; 185). There is, perhaps, no better place to turn to expose the performative and fabricated pieces of Júlia’s self-presentation than to the additional role she played in the Almeida household -- that of the family breadwinner. Unlike his wife, Filinto was, as Arturo Mota observes, “de produção lenta”; after the well-received *Lyrical* that won him Júlia, he took 27 years to publish a second volume of poems (Menezes 21). In the interim it was Júlia whose books were sold and republished, who delivered conferences on both sides of the Atlantic and who, in the fiscal crisis following the First World War, became one of just a few Brazilian writers whose books were so reliably profitable that printers did not require her to underwrite their costs of publication (Sharpe, “Caminho” 11). As Sharpe explains, she became “a primeira escritora profissional das letras brasileira que conseguiu sustentar-se a si e à família com renda proveniente de seus livros,” an accomplishment that was not unnoticed by her husband and children (“Júlia” 197). Margarida Lopes de Almeida, for example, would later remember that her mother used profits from one of her books to travel the family to Europe (Telles 441). And in the last collection of poems he published in his lifetime, *Dona Júlia* (1938), Filinto would recognize not only Júlia’s devotion to their family but also that “Por mais de cinquenta anos de labor, / Teu génio excelso produziu riqueza” (125). Notably, at the collection’s foot he reprints Júlia’s *Noivas* dedication and also an inventory of her works. In this we witness *auctoritas* exchanged: In death it is Jú-



lia who authorizes Filinto's literary enterprise. Ludmer's first "treta" could perhaps be rewritten as the distinction between what is said and what is *done*: No matter Júlia's public insistence that she values and adheres to the conventional masculine/feminine binary, her actions reveal a resistant woman in a relatively progressive marriage. Protestations of undiluted wifely, motherly submission serve performative rather than mimetic ends.

Thus we revisit the question of Júlia Lopes de Almeida's feminism and the unfortunate charge that *Noivas* reiterates rather than contests Brazil's patriarchal order. In that it publicizes her submission to her husband's *auctoritas* and to her family duties, the epistolary dedication to Filinto corroborates Needell's claim that "the greater worldliness of the *belle époque* woman" must not be mistaken "for liberation. A more active role and broader experience do not constitute freedom" (135). Further, the volume includes several lines that convey gender advocacy so reactionary it is difficult to excuse. For example, in "Concessões para a Felicidade," Almeida criticizes women who seek husbands they can rule: "A mim," she says, "deve ser o contrario; que do lado do homen, o mais forte, o responsavel, o chefe, é que deve estar, mesmo para alegria e conforto da nossa alma, a superioridade intellectual" (49). Anathema to most feminists, this advice exemplifies not only the paradox of *Noivas* but the paradox of Almeida's literary career. Contemplated in isolation, the line betrays the author's internalized sense of alterity and inferiority -- what Gilbert and Gubar call the woman writer's "anxiety of authorship," which they define as "an anxiety built from complex and often only barely conscious fears of that authority which seems to the female artist to be by definition inappropriate to her sex" (51). But

reconsidered in its context within *Noivas* and in its relation to the author's biography, the line, like the dedication to Filinto, acquires subversive nuance. It does not advocate submission based on assumptions of men's moral or physical superiority but emphasizes, instead, their intellectual superiority, a result of unequal access to education, not of nature. It ironically implies what Butler would call a "troubling" question: What is desirable about a man who has received an education and yet remains intellectually inferior to an uneducated woman? For Almeida, acquiring a husband of "superioridade intelectual" is a concession *and* an opportunity; after all, a schooled man can be both a husband and a teacher. As we have seen, she knew first-hand the relative freedom to be attained in marrying a man from whom she could learn and upon whom she could depend to defend her unladylike intellectualism to naysayers outside the relationship. And as Butler writes, "to operate within the matrix of power is not the same as to replicate uncritically relations of domination" (42) -- a point to which we shall return in the next section.

## **“ENSINAR A APPRENDER”: A MODERN CURRICULUM FOR THE MODERN WOMAN**

In the essay “On Citizenship,” introduced above, Beatriz González Stephan declares that “[t]o read one constitution or manual is to read them all” (389). For her, writers of conduct manuals are what Foucault calls, in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), “technicians of behavior” (1491): Their manuals, which González Stephan considers invariably disciplinary, “form a set of ‘specialized technologies’ and public order institutions that coerce, control, subject, and softly regulate the movement of bodies to make them tamed subjectivities” and thus perpetuate state-sanctioned structures and mindsets that distribute power unequally (387). With especial focus on “Saber Ser Pobre,” “Os Livros,” and “O Dia do Casamento,” three *crônicas* I consider paradigmatic of the contours of the didactic project Almeida undertakes in *Noivas*, in this section I contend that despite her replication of so-called “specialized technologies” like family hygiene, the display of wealth, and, to an extent, the application of women’s literacy, Almeida infuses her manual with material uncommon to the etiquette tradition -- for instance, lists of book recommendations -- and therefore resists, from the inside, patriarchal Brazil’s construction of moral and domestic womanhood. In particular, *Noivas* splits from its predecessors and contemporaries in its remediation of the “educação superficialíssima” inflicted upon its female readers (*Noivas* 13). As June E. Hahner explains in *Emancipating the Female Sex* (1990), Almeida is neither the first nor the loudest 19th-century woman to repudiate the content of women’s education as inadequate even to prepare women “to direct their children’s moral development and furnish the nation with good male citizens” (48). But she is, perhaps, the only to

remedy that defective education in a conduct manual -- better yet, in a textbook that *looks* and *reads* like a conduct manual. *Noivas* is, as I shall explain below, palimpsestic.

The novelty, even the transgression, of *Noivas* is illuminated when we accept González Stephan's challenge to read it beside contemporaneous manuals -- like Vera A. Cleser's popular *O Lar Doméstico: Conselhos para Boa Direcção de uma Casa*, released in Rio de Janeiro in 1898 and already in its fifth edition by 1916. Like Almeida's manual, Cleser's forswears a claim to artistic merit: "Não tenho a pretensão de dar á publicidade um trabalho litterario," the author explains, nearly exactly restating Almeida's insistence that *Noivas* is not "um livro litterario" but "um livro sentido." Cleser continues:

[O]ccupo-me dos arranjos e assumptos principaes da vida intima com a simplicidade despretenciosa de uma mãe que, com sua filha, percorre o lar e com ella analisa as occupaões diarias em todos os seus detalhes, da mesma fórma que o anatomia dissecca um musculo em todas as suas fibras (6).

Whereas Almeida's statement reveals a tactical dissimulation -- an emphatic denial to a perhaps legitimate claim to the phallus, as Gilbert and Gubar argue -- and is nullified by the self-conscious literariness of *Noivas*' contents, Cleser's deference accurately reflects her intentions; for *O Lar Doméstico* indeed prioritizes practicality over artistry, even in its presentation. Unlike Almeida's manual, whose *crônicas* oscillate between didactic prose, invented epistles and fictional sketches, are in some cases creatively titled, and are reinforced by the lush illustrations admired by Guiomar Torrezão, Cleser's book is written in a uniform didactic prose, is explicitly titled, and is un-illustrated. Its reader knows pre-

cisely what information s/he will encounter in chapters with names like “Infusão Insecticida,” “Como Se Limpam Objetos de Cobre Dourado,” and “Proceso para Tornar Incombustivel o Vestuario.” Almeida’s manual supplies similar tips, but obscured by titles like “O Dia do Casamento,” “Notas de um *Ménagere*,” and “Entre dos Berços,” her practical recommendations may only be detected by the patient, thorough reader. Moreover, although both women acquiesce to prevalent notions of so-called feminine morality, a point to which we shall return, only Almeida endeavors to define, even expand, the purposes and conditions of that predetermined role. And in *crônicas* like “Os Doentes,” “Os Animaes,” and “Carinhosa Hospitalidade,” she asserts an amount of public space wherein women may extend their moral influence. Conversely, Cleser replicates “containment and docility” insofar as she accepts and redeploys so restricted an interpretation of the woman’s sphere of influence that only implicitly does she acknowledge that most women do occasionally leave their homes (González Stephan 392). “No universo tudo obedece ás leis de uma immutavel ordem,” she writes. “A actividade do homem tambem deve regular-se por um systema de ordem, um espirito de ordem dever dar aos trabalhos caseiros a mulher um valor mais elevado e ser a senda sobre a qual se mova tranquillamente este pequeno reino em que ella é a soberana” (10). A narrow path, a minute sovereignty -- *O Lar Doméstico* abounds in images of women ordered, women reined in by society’s prescriptions for their conduct in private and public.

A second profound discrepancy between the two manuals is their authors’ respective opinions on the ideal curriculum for a woman’s education. Almeida and Cleser both

indicate the need for wives and especially mothers to be well-versed in scientific and medical practices lest their naïveté put their family's or community's health at jeopardy. Of the two, it is Almeida who stresses the point more consistently: Coincidentally, both manuals include chapters titled "A Roupas Brancas," but whereas *O Lar Doméstico* supplies practical, even mathematical advice to its readers -- "As fronhas que a moda favorece ha longos annos têm 60-65 centímetros em quadro; são contornadas de um babadinho ao centro" (96) -- *Noivas* uses the subject of white linens and apparel as its invitation to decry the popular practice of sending laundry to the "ar viciado" of urban *cortiços* for cleansing (20). To an extent, both Almeida and Cleser restate the pseudo-scientific conclusions of late 19th-century Brazilian hygienists who, as Sônia Roncador summarizes in *A Doméstica Imaginária* (2008), alerted the inhabitants of Brazil's urban centers of the potential for contamination when bodies and clothes traversed social classes (25-6). However, despite the writers' shared assertion that mothers, rather than fathers, carry the responsibility to ensure the sanitarianess of their homes, children and servants, for Cleser that responsibility comes second to women's duty to mundane domestic tasks. "A educação da mulher não consiste tão sómente no conhecimento das sciencias e das artes," she opines in the manual's introduction (9). Rather,

A mais solida base para a felicidade que uma boa mãe possa dar á sua filha, consiste em familiarisar esta, desde a infancia, com o serviço domestico, occupando-a conforme a sua idade e forças. . . . Sim, os trabalhos caseiros são

insignificantes, faceis, triviaes, mas o conjuncto destas insignificancias é o conforto, a prosperidade, a dôce e irresistivel attacção do lar! (8-9).

In *Noivas*, Almeida declares a similar scorn for women who see themselves above the minutiae of quotidian chores. In “A Mesa” and “Os Criados,” for example, she prompts her readers to learn to cook and complete other domestic tasks, for one must be able to monitor one’s servants’ efficiency and, more importantly, be able to do their work should unexpected poverty or widowhood strike. But unlike Cleser’s manual, which remedies what the author perceives an overall lack in women’s household savvy with 60+ narrowly focused chapters on the various labors and processes that distinguish the “labyrinth domestic” of the bourgeois home, Almeida displays a counterintuitive *disinterest* in closing the gaps in her readers’ domestic skills (336). Inherent in all etiquette literature, Schwarcz explains, is the didactic link between the author (as teacher) and reader (as student); as she notes in *The Emperor’s Beard*, the desired outcome is for the reader to “[learn] the details of polite behavior by heart, and [use] them as though they were expressions of his [or her] individuality” (150). Further, “Anyone who thinks good style displays originality is naïve; the only way to be correct is to know the rules” (150). Schwarcz’s words neatly correspond to Cleser’s manual, which operates under the assumption that conscientious readers will mimic the author’s advice, based “ora na minha propria experiencia, ora nas opiniões dos melhores auctores estrangeiros e nacionaes,” in their own homes (6).

Almeida, however, pursues a more ambitious objective. In “Saber Ser Pobre,” her manual’s second *crônica*, she articulates *Noivas*’ distinct mission statement:

A necessidade ensinará tudo a alguns, mas não ensina a todos o que a pobreza requer. A virtude está em o discípulo saber aproveitar a lição sem ficar ainda em cima com rancor ao mestre.

O que eu desejaria, portanto, seria, não um livro que ensinasse a executar este ou aquelle trabalho, mas um livro que ensinasse a apprender, chegada a hora em que isso fosse preciso. E esse livro, consolador e amargo, os paes o dariam á sua filha como um dote precidente e util (15).

Notice, once more, the discrepancy between the writer's earlier claim to have authored a mere "livro sentido" and her revised claim, here, to have authored a "precidente" and "util" textbook whose intent is to "ensina[r] a apprender": In yet another instance of subtle Almeidian irony, the manual's contents defy its description. On one hand, to the extent that it idealizes Rio de Janeiro's substantial poverty, "Saber Ser Pobre" reveals an unfortunate absence of class sensitivity. Indeed, when she says, a few lines later, "O ter-se nascido pobre é, nesses casos, um dos maiores beneficios que ha" (17), we would do well to recall Hahner's remark that Almeida's relative material comfort "no doubt influenced" the timbre of her discourse on women's roles (*Emancipating* 115). On the other hand, insofar as Almeida discerns a link between the city's poor and women left unemployable and destitute in widowhood, "Saber Ser Pobre" anticipates Woolf's thesis, in *A Room of One's Own*, that women have always lived in a poverty imposed upon them by men. This is especially true for women writers. "[F]iction is like a spider's web, attached ever so lightly perhaps, but still attached to life at all four corners," Woolf writes (41). "But when the



web is pulled askew, hooked up at the edge, torn in the middle, one remembers that these webs are not spun in mid-air by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in” (40-41). The web metaphor refers, specifically, to the invention of fiction; however, given Woolf’s general concern for the social and material conditions under which women have labored, I do not believe it a stretch to broadly apply it to women’s experiences. In addition to health, money and “the houses we live in,” the inventory of “grossly material things” that determine women’s autonomy should include their education. As Almeida implies in “Saber Ser Pobre,” women poor in education and intellectual ability may, in fact, be even less advantaged than women poor only in money.

It is for these women, preliminarily literate and educated chiefly in the social graces, to whom Almeida addresses *Noivas*. For her, the ideal “discipulo” will do more than internalize and rotely reenact her domestic recommendations. Rather, she intends the book to “ensina[r] a apprender” -- to transform the passive reader into an active, self-educating and self-sufficient contributor to modern Brazilian society. In various places, Almeida prompts readers to not just blindly accept the best practices she puts forward but instead to replicate the processes by which she discovered them, to conduct their own research, to continue to educate themselves afterward. Unlike *O Lar Doméstico*, which purportedly relays the “opiniões dos melhores estrangeiros e nacionaes” but tends not to cite them by name, *Noivas* assembles a veritable canon of texts to which the reader may turn for continued education, to resolve questions left unanswered by *Noivas* (6). Almeida

berates the novels of Xavier de Montepin and Ponson du Terrail, for to read escapist romances is worse than to be illiterate (38), and in their stead endorses historical and philosophical books like Herbert Spencer's *Education* (1860), Charles Kingsley's *Health and Education* (1874), and Jules Michelet's *The People* (1845) and *The Bird* (1856), the latter she translates at length in "As Aves"; the poems of Luís de Camões; the novels of Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr; the memoirs of George Sand; the "livros de *ménage*" of Anaís Lebrun, the Countess of Bassanville (25); and, in general, such nonfiction as newspaper columns, aquarium catalogues and gardening manuals. Born to a family "onde se produzia e respirava arte," Almeida knew first-hand the emancipatory and didactic value of literature (Sharpe, "Caminho" 16). What we know of her parents, Silveira Lopes and Antônia Adelina do Amaral Pereira, indicates their warm support of her childhood talent for letters; in the interview with João do Rio, for instance, Almeida reveals that it was her father who, unbeknownst to her at the time, facilitated her first publication, a *crônica* about a theatrical performance by a visiting Italian actress (29). However, she concedes that not all women are encouraged by their parents to read, and more importantly, to read what they should. "Hoje em dia o não saber ler é, felizmente, considerado uma vergonha," she writes in "Os Livros," yet "ainda ha... chefes de familia que abominam os livros, ordenando ás filhas que não toquem nunca em semelhanta coisa" (35). Thus, despite João Luso's compliment, excerpted earlier, that *Noivas* is a "curso" predicated on Almeida's personal experiences, the book's emphasis on books and recurrent intertextuality reveals that it is, in fact, a "curso" accompanied by a demanding syllabus of additional reading --

homework. The manual seeks to refine the Brazilian woman's critical faculties, to replace escapist novels with educational tomes.

This latter point -- Almeida's disdain for the "novellas prejudiciaes, insalubres, recheiadas de aventuras romanticas e de heroes perigosas" (36) -- is critiqued by Marisa Lajolo and Regina Zilberman for its implicit appeal to feminine altruism: "Ela direciona as leitoras para livros sadios, afirma a missão educativa da mulher dentro do lar e reitera a desconfiança perante as más leituras," they explain in the ambitious *A Formação da Leitura no Brasil* (1996). "Também então se reforçou a noção de que a sociedade carecia de mulheres instruídas, educadas, porém, para as necessidades do grupo social, e não da própria mulher" (265). The defense of women's education for its utilitarian value is common in late 19th-century discourse on revised women's education. As Hahner writes, progressives of both sexes tended to rationalize improvements in education as beneficial, primarily, to men. "After all," she says, "men were concerned for the future of their sons, and that must include their education" ("Nineteenth" 259). In *Emancipating the Female Sex*, Hahner supplies examples such as the statesman Antonio de Almeida Oliveira, who contended that "[t]o meet their familial, and therefore societal, obligations, girls needed a basic education equal to boys', plus sewing and embroidery" (49). With Almeida de Oliveira, as well as José de Alencar, Machado de Assis, Aluísio Azevedo, Adolfo Caminha and other (male) intellectuals, Júlia Lopes de Almeida formed a confederacy of Brazilian intellectuals who, in Sharpe's words, argued "a educação adequada às mulheres estaria ligado ao bem-estar social da família e, por extensão, à bem-sucedida consoli-

dação dos ideais republicanos” (“Júlia” 204). From the start to the finish of her career similar appeals to men’s self-interest and affirmations of women’s inherent moral altruism proliferate, often tied to defenses of women’s education. In *Contos Infantis* (1886)<sup>12</sup>, her first published volume, for example, she narrates the mirth shared by an old, blind general and his granddaughter, Valentina, who keeps him company and reads to him from her history books. The old man, at first a representative of what Almeida calls, in “Os Livros,” “[o]s pães antigos [que] proibiam a leitura ás filhas, afirmando que os livros eram os peiores inimigos da alma,” finds entertainment, comfort and unexpected companionship in his granddaughter’s budding intellectualism (35). And Valentina learns the value of the education for which her mother, a widow, has made personal and financial sacrifices: Learning enables her to relieve her grandfather’s loneliness, to become an active contributor to the happiness of her own home. Even young girls, the author implies, play roles that require education.

In *Noivas*, Almeida defends the necessity of improved women’s education in bolder but nonetheless altruistic terms. The book opens with “O Dia do Casamento,” a monologue spoken by a mother, Almeida’s alter-ego, to her soon-to-be-married daughter:

A felicidade humana deriva do que vive sob a nossa responsabilidade. É a nós, como mães, que a patria supplica bons cidadãos; é de nós, quando esposas, que a sociedade exige o maior exemplo de dignidade e de moral. Com a educação superficialissima que temos, não meditamos nisto, e levamos de continuo a

quexarnos de que é nullo o papel que nos confiaram... Como poderíamos, todavia, encontrar outro mais amplo e mais sagrado? (ellipses in the original; 13).

A product of its epoch, the *crônica* indeed naturalizes male/female and public/private binaries and, moreover, consolidates the stereotype of the woman as yardstick for her family's and country's moral constitutions and in this sense warrants Lajolo and Zilberman's critique. Of course, not only in Brazil was women's education depicted as a matter of national security; identical rhetoric surfaces to an extent in every North and South American country. One of its most persistent purveyers is the Peruvian schoolteacher and novelist Teresa González de Fanning, who, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries wrote a series of essays in which she articulates similar pleas for an expanded, more rigorous women's education predicated upon what she terms, in "Sobre la Educación de la Mujer" (1876), "la abnegación." A woman's "mission," she writes, "is to console, and she is never more beautiful or angelic than when she sacrifices her pleasure and even her necessary rest in favor of her people" (37)<sup>13</sup>. In a later essay, "Educación Femenina" (1905), she pillories the tendency of Peruvian parents to send daughters to convent schools -- "[C]ómo las monjas que abjuran de la familia, del matrimonio y de la sociedad, podran educar hijas sumisas y cariñosas, esposas ejemplares y buenas madres de familia? Eso equivale á pretender que un ciego enseñe la pintura ó un sordo el canto" (3) -- as well as the expectation that any woman may raise a sensitive, educated, patriotic son without having first been educated herself. "[L]a educación es la base sobre que se alza el edificio social!" González de Fanning exclaims. "De ella depende la suerte de la familia, ese laboratorio

de hombres, de donde han de salir los ciudadanos que den lustre á patria ó que la hundan en el abismo del retroceso” (14). Whether she lives in Brazil or Peru, the uneducated woman is unable to ensure her country’s future will be distinguished by “felicidade” and “bon cidadãos.” Like González de Fanning, who compares the nuns of Peruvian convent schools to “un ciego [que] enseñe la pintura,” Almeida describes the process whereby the uneducated woman endeavors to educate her children as a form of blindness. “Ha muito quem tenha a mania de começar cedo a ensinar coisas, quasi sempre de uma maneira complicadissima, ás pobres criancinhas,” she writes in “Educação.” “Esse systema,” she continues, inflicts upon children “um verdadeiro martyrio” (200). But at least women, untrained but dutiful, make an attempt. More likely, Almeida contends, the uneducated woman -- the woman who does not “medita[r]” -- may not even realize that it is her moral and patriotic duty to provide her children an education from early childhood forward.

Because Brazil’s future citizens must be educated, their mothers must too be educated. Almeida’s adherence to this prewritten altruistic logic, despite Lajolo’s and Zilberman’s objections, places her in a position to redefine from inside the private sphere’s contours to empower rather than disempower women. Thus we return to Josefina Ludmer’s “tretas del débil,” the second of which is the reformulation of the boundary between what may and may not be known, to include what previously had been withheld, now that knowledge and speech have been divorced. In her reply to Fernández de Santa Cruz, Sor Juana accepts that women should not theologize in public but denies that that prohibition should extend to women’s private activity. For even when it adheres to patriarchal con-

vention, a woman's life is saturated by science -- "Si Aristóteles hubiera guisado, mucho más hubiera escrito," she quips -- and since the study of science and the study of theology point toward the same metaphysical truths, why impose one upon women but deny them the other (839)? This "treta," Ludmer concludes, "consiste en que, desde el lugar asignado y aceptado, se cambia no sólo el sentido de ese lugar sino el sentido mismo de lo que se instaure en él. Como si una madre o ama de casa dijera: acepto mi lugar pero hago política o ciencia en tanto madre or ama de casa" (53). For Sor Juana, acquiescence to the "lugar asignado y aceptado" of the woman and nun -- a definitively secluded social role in 17th-century Mexico -- permits her the opportunity to speak as an authority about that space, to reconstruct it, to stretch its parameters to annex such previously suppressed "campos" as science and theology. Almeida does not share the nun's passion for scriptural interpretation. But like Sor Juana she acquiesces to social prescriptions for women's domestic responsibilities in order to argue, with authority, that those responsibilities necessitate critical and scientific faculties presently denied them. As we have seen, Almeida often simultaneously accepts and laces resistance into traditional circumscriptions of femininity. In Cátia Toledo Mendonça's words, "As posições que parecem ser conservadoras e reprodutoras de uma visão sectária em relação á mulher" -- her deferential dedication to Filinto, for instance, or her subscription to the stereotype of the altruistic Brazilian woman -- "podem e devem ser vistas como *estratégias* para que sua obra não crie conflitos frontais com a crítica falocêntrica, que a condenaria ao anonimato" (my emphasis; 294). In "O Dia do Casamento," her acceptance of women's conventional duty

to the family's and country's survival and women's natural propensity to sacrifice themselves for the greater good -- in short, their *abnegación* -- buys her the opportunity to likewise denounce the also-conventional "educação superficialíssima" that leaves women unprepared to fulfill that duty or make those sacrifices.

Moreover, Almeida embraces the stereotype of the moral Brazilian woman because she deems it truer and more workable than the common alternative -- the stereotype of the lazy, backward Brazilian woman. The latter, Hahner says, is what had prevailed in written accounts by European travelers since before the 19th century ("Nineteenth" 255). The mention in "O Dia do Casamento" of women's mistaken impression that their social role is "nullo" prefigures Almeida's later claim in "A Mulher Brasileira" (from the *Livro das Donas e Donzellas*; 1906), that despite Europe's "noção falsíssima," the Brazilian woman is, in fact, more than the "prototipo da nullidade" (35). Instead, Almeida insists, she is distinguished "pela presteza com que se submete aos sacrificios, a bem dos seus, e pela sua virtude" (35-6). In both books, the association between women and morality ("virtude") enables; it constructs women as active rather than passive contributors to their household and authorizes an education that encourages them to fulfill their duties more efficiently. As Roncador writes, "Contra o estereótipo da matrona obesa, indolente, ignorante, irascível, excessivamente sentimental e amorosa, precocemente envelhecida e principalmente indiferente ao trabalho domiciliar e aos cuidados maternos, Almeida defendeu o que para ela seria, portanto, seu contra-ponto ideal, ou seja *a mulher doméstica*" (her emphasis; 21). Like González de Fanning, who advocates physical in addition



to intellectual education for women, at various points in *Noivas* Almeida revisits the argument that women are comparatively happier and healthier when active in their predetermined roles than inactive and, worse, indifferent. “Não te resignes a ser em tua casa um objecto do luxo,” she writes in “O Dia do Casamento,” “A mulher não nasceu só para adornar, nasceu para a lucta, para o amor e para o triumpho do mundo inteiro!” (13). Later, in “Floricultura,” she advises bored women to adopt practical, physical hobbies like gardening: “Sem occupaões, os dias são interminaveis, tediosos e doentios; vem-nos o enfado, o mal-estar, e a melancholia”. “Pois bem, minhas amigas!”, she continues, “Cultivae flores” (131). Neither stereotype is unrestrictive: Is an ideal Brazilian woman moral, domestic, and active? Or disengaged, frivolous, and lazy? In retrospect, we could perhaps say Almeida makes what Joseph Conrad’s Marlow calls a tactical “choice of nightmares” (63); she embraces the archetype she believes offers superior autonomy and social importance. As a result, she acquiesces to and furthers the conventional social distinction between male and female, public and private. But she also finds release from what Telles declares the vicious circle of discourse on women’s education: “[C]omo não tem instrução, não está apta a participar da vida pública,” the hegemonic logic goes, “e não recebe instrução porque não participa dela” (406). Because Brazilian women are, by society’s own definition, responsible for their husbands’ and sons’ public displays of morality, they demand education. Responsibility for morality is, at least, a responsibility: Almeida finds in society’s construction of the morally unimpeachable woman an invitation for indirect civic involvement. Like González de Fanning, she posits the rhetorical question: If so-

ciety expects women to train sons into exemplary citizens, must women not also be trained in citizenship? Thus her lament, in “O Dia do Casamento,” that too infrequently do Brazilian women “medita[r]” upon the profundity of their role in their nation’s forward march; thus her emphasis in *Noivas* on women’s capacity to think critically and read *the right books*, two issues hardly broached in more orthodox manuals like Cleser’s *O Lar Doméstico*. Instead of a blind or insensitive perpetuation of women’s subordination to men’s interests, then, *Noivas* reveals a woman writer who, in Butler’s words, operates “within the matrix of power” and there accesses a socially acceptable agency otherwise unavailable to her (42). Seen as an *estratégia* or *treta*, Almeida’s submission to patriarchal stereotypes is rendered a vehicle for relative liberation rather than furthered oppression. As Butler explains in *Gender Trouble*, when a subject adopts one gendered identity when s/he “could, in principle, take on some other,” s/he claims autonomy (11).

In the past few decades, Almeida’s works have received far more critical attention than they received in her lifetime. And yet, in these recent *estudos almeidianos*, mentions of *Noivas* are infrequent, brief, and tend to reinforce their authors’ interpretations of her novels and stories. Perhaps the most generous of these is Roncador’s *A Doméstica Imaginária*, whose central argument is that Almeida embraces and redeploys myths (female hysteria) and stereotypes (she specifies that of the untrustworthy, invasive servant) for her “fins pedagógicos” (41). That is, she combines reason, prejudice and fear to persuade middle-class women to become more active contributors to Brazilian society. With reference to “Os Criados,” “De Sala à Cozinha,” and additional *crônicas* that address tension

between *patona* and servant, Roncador determines that *Noivas* exposes “uma continuidade” in Almeida’s expansive literary corpus. She writes, “não somente em seus escritos mais dogmáticos, como o manual doméstico *Livro das noivas* e as crônicas jornalísticas, mas também em seus romances e contos, pode-se observar um compromisso com o mesmo projecto pedagógico, como se a sua obra se dirigesse a um público feminino ao qual se quisesse transmitir os valores, os costumes e as responsabilidades pertinentes à mulher na sociedade moderna brasileira” (28). Once more, we confront the issue of Almeida’s problematic feminism -- *problematic*, I say, not because it is absent (as Needell contends) but because her vision of the modernized woman at the end of the 19th century looks so different from our own, at the start of the 21st. Almeida’s modernized woman is one who remains loyal in her traditional responsibilities but approaches those responsibilities professionally -- educated so that she may educate her children, abreast of medically-sanctioned standards of hygiene so that she may implement them in her home to the benefit of her husband and family. Her vision for a professionalized maternity is not far removed from that promoted by Charlotte Perkins Gilman in *The Home*: “When the human mother shows that she understands her splendid function,” Gilman writes, “by developing a free, strong, healthy body; by selecting a vigorous and noble mate; by studying the needs of childhood, and meeting them with proficient services, her own or that of others better fitted; by presenting to the world a race of children who do not die in infancy, who are not preyed upon by ‘preventable diseases,’ who grow up straight, strong, intelligent, free-minded and right-intentioned; then shall we have some reason to honour motherhood, and

it will be brain-work and soul-work that we honor” (60-1). Antiquated though Almeida’s logic seems to us now, the four republications of *Noivas* speak to her influence in *belle époque* Brazil. As Cátia Toledo Mendonça explains, “o *Livro das noivas* já fazia sucesso entre as jovens brasileiras que, através de sua leitura, encontravam informações que não eram fornecidas pela família” (279). Insofar as *Noivas* advocates and, as Mendonça’s words reveal, even provides a revised curriculum for women founded upon their potential for “brain-work” and “soul-work” that shall impact the nation’s future citizenry for the better, Almeida, like Gilman, approximates the revolutionary.

## Notes

1. Almeida's first publication, coordinated by her father, was printed in the *Gazeta de Campinas*, December 8th, 1881. It was a review of a recent performance by the Italian actress Gemma Cuniberti at the Teatro São Carlos. See Rio (29-30) for the author's reflections and Sharpe ("Júlia" 191) for bibliographic details.
2. Noteworthy exceptions include Sharpe's "*Maternidade: Uma Visão Política de Júlia Lopes de Almeida*" (*Mulher: Cinco Séculos de Desenvolvimento na América, Capítulo Brasil*, 1999, pp. 347-359) and Stanislavski's "Uma Leitura de *Contos Infantis* (1886), de Adelina Lopes Vieira e Júlia Lopes de Almeida" (*Revista de Iniciação Científica da FFC* 4.2, 2004, pp. 198-213).
3. For further information about Brazil's first women's periodicals, see Hahner ("Nineteenth"). Naronha, an Argentina-born schoolteacher in Rio de Janeiro, was the founder and first editor of *O Jornal das Senhoras*, which ran 1852 to 1855.
4. Editor of *O Jornal das Senhoras* in its final year and, later, the founder and editor of *O Domingo*, which ran from 1873 to 1875.
5. Founder of *O Sexo Feminino*, which ran sporadically from 1873 to 1876. Hahner reports the journal was restarted in 1889, under the revised name *O Quinze de Novembro do Sexo Feminino*, and ran until roughly 1896 (281).
6. Founder of *Echo das Damas*, which ran from 1879 to 1880 and 1885 to 1888.
7. As far as I know, *Noivas* was outperformed in the market only by her two textbooks for children: *Contos Infantis* (1886), which she coauthored with her

- sister, Adelina Lopes de Vieira, and saw seventeen editions (Sharpe, “Júlia”, 201; 208), and *Historias da Nossa Terra* (1922), which saw twenty-two (Telles 440).
8. Luiza Lobo and Sharpe have each compiled superb bibliographies of literature by and about Almeida. See Lobo’s *Guia de Escritoras da Literatura Brasileira* (2006; pp. 160-169) and Sharpe’s “Júlia” (207-214).
  9. “Este meu seio, nú / De todo o amor de outr’ora, / Minha esplendente aurora, / Sómente o occupas tu,” for example (41-4). Sharpe reports it was the “má fama” of Filinto’s bohemian friends to which Júlia’s parents objected. The commitment to Júlia he expresses in “Dedicatória” may have curbed their concerns that he was apt to stray.
  10. “Dentro das paredes da minha casa ou da caixa do meu cérebro, não ocorre incidente sem que o senhor meu esposo não exija contas escrupulosas...” (264).
  11. Established by Machado de Assis in 1897, the Academia Brasileira de Letras invites into its ranks what its membership believes the nation’s finest writers. Apparently, for a time Júlia Lopes de Almeida’s name was circulated as a potential inductee, despite the institution’s exclusion of women, but in the end it was Filinto who received the invitation. See Sharpe (“Caminho” 11).
  12. As noted above, *Contos Infantis* was coauthored by Almeida and her elder sister, Adelina Lopes de Vieira. The book’s index clearly attributes “A Leitura” as well as its other fictional pieces to Almeida and the poetry to Vieira.

13. González de Fanning's reference, here, to a woman's sacrifice of "necessary rest" elucidates Almeida's memorable description, in "Os Livros," of daughters whose fathers have forbidden them to read and so, to circumvent the patriarchal mandate, read after dark, in their beds, in secret. For her, the father's antiquated "ordem despótica", intended to ensure the daughter's morality, beauty and health, in fact reverses those three qualities. Able but disallowed to read, she defies her father's mandate and, to explain her exhaustion, lies; in short, she has become immoral. Forced to read secretly, when she should be asleep, she is fatigued, pale, nervous, unkempt and lacks appetite; she has forfeited beauty and health. In this there is both acquiescence to conventional femininity and an appeal to men's self-interest.

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