

# Two Marias: Illegitimacy and Agency on the fringes of the Restoration Court

**BEN JAMES**

Palácio Nacional de Sintra

[ben.djames@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:ben.djames@yahoo.co.uk)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8684-410X>

Texto recebido em / Text submitted on: 21/01/2024

Texto aprovado em / Text approved on: 29/07/2024



**Abstract.** Soror Maria da Cruz was a nun at the convento de Nossa Senhora da Quietação in Alcântara whilst Dona Maria lived unprofessed at the convento de Santa Teresa de Jesus in Carnide. These seventeenth-century women have long been considered the same person. Both were illegitimate and were related to the royal family. An analysis of the letters that they wrote and received evidence the scope of their roles and their influence which extended into the political and diplomatic spheres.

**Keywords.** Nuns, Early modern Portugal, Letter writing, Illegitimacy, Royal family.

God willing that, based on these and other elements that may eventually appear, a faithful portrait of the kind and sympathetic Soror Maria da Cruz, now only sketched, may one day be [properly] drawn (CAVALHEIRO 1944: 22)<sup>1</sup>.

## Introduction

In 1944, António Rodrigues Cavalheiro published an article in the *Anais da Academia Portuguesa da História* in which he attributed letters and other documents, either as author, recipient or subject, to one woman (CAVALHEIRO 1944: 11-76)<sup>2</sup>. In fact, Cavalheiro had conflated the documents of two different women; a nun, Soror Maria da Cruz, and an illegitimate *infanta*, Dona Maria. Both of these women had important links to the royal family through their illegitimate kinship as well as broad social networks that consisted

<sup>1</sup> “Oxalá que, sobre estes e outros elementos que porventura apareçam, se possa um dia traçar o fiel retrato da bondosa e simpática Soror Maria da Cruz, agora apenas esboçado” (all translations are my own).

<sup>2</sup> The originals are held at the Bibliothèque nationale de France, Paris. Cavalheiro was an active member of the *Integralismo Lusitano* and went on to support António de Oliveira Salazar (1889-1970) and the *Estado Novo* (1933-1974). The secret police “considered him, according to the 1949 register”, “one of the most enthusiastic and fervent nationalists of all time” / *considerava-o, segundo registo de 1949, “um dos mais entusiastas e fervorosos nacionalistas de todos os tempos”* (BRANCO).

of other influential individuals including Portuguese nobles as well as foreign dignitaries. Cavalheiro's misnaming matters because it has limited not only our understanding of the royal kinship network in seventeenth-century Portugal but also obfuscated the influential roles of two of its members. Thus neither Soror Maria da Cruz nor Dona Maria have ever been considered relevant players in the historiography of seventeenth-century Portugal. This is consistent with a broader historiographical trend that has limited the number of women included in the social, political and diplomatic histories of early modern Portugal. Overwhelmingly, studies of Portuguese queens dominate, even senior noblewomen have not figured prominently within these same historiographies and so the merging of these Marias' identities and obfuscation of their roles has dovetailed with existing lacunae within Lusophone historiography.

This article seeks to fulfil part of Cavalheiro's hope quoted at the beginning, and in so doing it will correct his mistake that has so muddled the historiography. By correcting Cavalheiro's conflation this article also intends to expand the understanding of the network of the newly-restored royal family in Portugal as well as underscore the political, courtly and diplomatic relevance of these two Marias. By clearly separating these two illegitimate members of the royal family, this article will clarify what their separate positions and roles were. Soror Maria da Cruz was an agent of the state in both her capacity as a nun praying for the welfare of the kingdom and royal family but also in her engagement with foreign and Portuguese political and diplomatic actors. Dona Maria was a much more constrained individual, her royal blood acting as a double-edged sword that both afforded her influence and connections to power whilst also defining her as a potential threat to the supremacy of the legitimate family.

Firstly I will lay out a biographical overview of each woman in order to ground the analysis of their writings. Secondly, I will consider the spread of Cavalheiro's mistake within the historiography as well as other gaps within the literature. Thirdly, I will analyse the existing documentation pertaining to both Marias, starting with Cavalheiro's collection before moving on to sources found in other archival collections.

## 1. Biographies

Soror Maria da Cruz was born at some point in the late 1620s presumably, in or near Sanlúcar (Andalusia), the seat of the Dukes of Medina Sidonia. Her father was Gaspar de Guzmán y Sandoval, 9th Duke of Medina Sidonia

(1602-1664) but her mother's identity remains unknown<sup>3</sup>. Her paternal aunt was Luísa de Guzmán (1613-1666), Queen of Portugal 1640-1666. Soror Maria joined her aunt when she went to Portugal in 1633 in order to marry the duque de Bragança, future King of Portugal. In Vila Viçosa (Alentejo), Luísa de Guzmán went to live at the ducal palace and Soror Maria da Cruz went to be educated in the neighbouring Franciscan *convento das Chagas*. In December 1640, Soror Maria moved to Lisbon with the newly proclaimed royal family where she entered the Franciscan *convento de Nossa Senhora da Quietação* in Alcântara (BELÉM 1758: 546). She made her final profession in 1644 with the royal family in attendance and at which Padre António Vieira, the celebrated Jesuit, preached (VIEIRA 1644). This convent received royal funds and abutted the *Quinta de Alcântara*, one of the favoured residences of the new royal family (CASTELLO BRANCO 1971: 50-79; COSTA, CUNHA 2008: 169; COSTA 1712: 650). Soror Maria herself received 40 mil réis a year from the *Casa de Bragança* – the patrimonial estate of the duques de Bragança (BA, Man., 51-X-17: fl.214). It was within this convent that Soror Maria probably spent time with two of her cousins the *infantas* Dona Joana (1635-1653) and Dona Catarina (Catherine of Braganza 1638-1705, Queen-consort of England 1662-1685), and where she would eventually welcome foreign diplomats and dignitaries. It was from this convent that she would be one of the first to welcome the French queen-consort Maria Francisca de Sabóia (1646-1683) when she arrived in 1666 to marry Afonso VI (1643-1683), King of Portugal 1656-1683.

Dona Maria was born in Lisbon in April 1644, her father was João IV (1604–1656), King of Portugal 1640–1656, and her mother has been described as an *açafata* (dresser) to the queen-consort. Dona Maria was conceived whilst the queen was in the latter stages of a difficult pregnancy that resulted in the birth of Afonso VI (DEMERSON 1994: 790, 802)<sup>4</sup>. After Dona Maria was born, her mother was sent to live at the *mosteiro de Santa Maria de Chelas* (RAPOSO 1947: 206). Dona Maria was the only recognised illegitimate child of João IV; it was because of her recognised status that she was addressed by the styling of

<sup>3</sup> Don Gaspar led a rebellion against Philip IV of Spain from his power base in Andalusia (ALMELA 2013: 4-6).

<sup>4</sup> Luísa de Guzmán gave birth to seven living children but two died on the same day – Dona Ana (21st January 1635) and Dom Manuel (6th September 1640). An eighth child was stillborn sometime in November 1642, no name is recorded so presumably there had been no chance to perform a Baptism.

*highness* and that she was afforded the honorific *Dona*<sup>5</sup>. Initially, she was raised by António Cavide (João IV's confidant and secretary) until 1650 when she entered the Discalced Carmelite *convento de Santa Teresa de Jesus* in Carnide and remained there until her death (FIGUEIREDO 1817: 471-477). Here Dona Maria was raised by her father's third cousin Madre Micaela Margarida de Santa Ana<sup>6</sup>. Unlike Soror Maria da Cruz, Dona Maria was kept at a greater distance from the royal family presumably because she had royal blood in her veins – which would be discussed in reference to the fear of a succession crisis at the *cortes* – assembly/parliament – of 1674 (CAVALHEIRO 1944: 43-45). Whilst Carnide was nowhere near any royal residence, Dona Maria was afforded a sizeable income from the Crown and the *Casa de Bragança* that allowed her to become patron of Santa Teresa as well as founding a male convent, *São João da Cruz de Carnide* (ANTI, Ord. Carm. Des., Convento de São João da Cruz, Liv. 1, *Livro da Fundação*, Frontispiece)<sup>7</sup>. In 1687, Dona Maria was entrusted in turn with the education of her niece, Dona Luísa (1679–1732) – the illegitimate daughter of her half-brother Pedro II (1648-1706), Prince-Regent 1668-1683, King of Portugal 1683-1706 (SOUZA 1741: 459-460).

## 2. Seventeenth-century Convent Life

It was not unusual that both Soror Maria and Dona Maria spent their lives within convents as convents were considered suitable places for female education; they ensured a single-sex environment as well as the opportunity to be socialised with women and girls of a similar rank. With regards to illegitimate daughters, the conservative seventeenth-century writer Francisco Manuel de Melo advised that they *should* be raised in convents (MELO 1820: 116). Life within a convent did not cut women and girls off from their non-cloistered social or kinship networks. In Portugal, queens had rights of entry into Lisbon's female convents and would enter with the senior women of their households – many of whom were related to the women within the convents. Additionally, it was common for nuns to receive visitors – especially family – in their parlours. The presence of elite women inside convents and the maintenance

<sup>5</sup> There is a mention of a boy – Frei Manuel da Conceição – who was born in the year of João's marriage to Luísa de Guzmán, but who was not formally recognised. He became a Discalced Augustinian and was instrumental in the foundation of Luísa de Guzmán's convent even serving as the same queen's confessor (UC, Ms 997, *Fundação dos Agostinhos*: fls.2v-4).

<sup>6</sup> Madre Margarida was the illegitimate daughter of Matthias (1557–1619), Holy Roman Emperor 1612-1619. She shared a common ancestor with João IV in D. Manuel I (1469-1521), King of Portugal 1495-1521.

<sup>7</sup> Fundadora, & Padroeira a Sereniss.<sup>a</sup> Sñra D. Maria, filha do Sereniss.o Rey, & Sñr D. João o 4o.

of their social and kinship networks allowed for certain convents in Lisbon to become places of important political or diplomatic exchange as has been demonstrated in other settings and will be explored later in this article<sup>8</sup>.

In addition to the possibilities for continued social, cultural and political engagement, life within one of Lisbon's convents was not the picture of austerity that the monastic constitutions outlined. For example, convent communities hosted musical recitals, plays, poetry recitals (ANASTÁCIO 2010: 97; LISBOA, MIRANDA & OLIVAL 2002: 69; LISBOA, MIRANDA & OLIVAL 2005: 71). Men could sometimes enjoy the pleasures of convent hospitality though they were expected to remain outside of the monastic enclosure. In 1668, Cosimo de' Medici (later Grand Duke of Tuscany) enjoyed the gallant conversation and excellent music of the nuns at Odivelas. The nuns themselves were attired in pleated and starched veils such that "they descend[ed] like crystal bells" (RIVERO, RIVERO 1933: 277)<sup>9</sup>. The festivals of the Roman Catholic church and the monastic ceremonies provided regular opportunities for celebration, festivities and convent hospitality. The nuns at Madre de Deus would expose the alleged Holy Shroud that was in the community's possession, an annual event to which many people would gather outside the convent on land and on the river to see (RIBEIRO 1966: 199). Profession ceremonies or the election of an abbess might be marked by a procession of nobles or night-time illuminations and ringing bells (GAZETA 1723: 96; MATOZO 1934: 110).

### 3. Historiography

What of the lives of non-cloistered noblewomen? Early modern Portuguese noblewomen inhabit a lacuna within the historiography which skews towards an analysis of queens lives. There is a repeated position – that this article resists – that Portuguese noblewomen lived restricted and cloistered lives that prevented them from taking an active role within society.

In 2003, Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro analysed the structure and functioning of the Portuguese nobility as a privileged group and the ways in which it was managed by the Crown (MONTEIRO 2003). Monteiro's analysis is predominantly quantitative and does not enter into an analysis of the specific roles of

---

<sup>8</sup> This has been noted across Roman Catholic Europe in a number of excellent studies. James E. Kelly noted the importance of female convents as loci of information exchange and political planning for English Catholics (KELLY 2020). Equally, Magdalena S. Sánchez explored the relationship between monastic spaces and political power at the *Monasterio de las Descalzas Reales* in Madrid (SÁNCHEZ 1998).

<sup>9</sup> "veli bianchi in testa piegati, e insaldati, che scendono a guisa di campane di cristallo".

noblewomen either at court, in their own households, or on their estates. In the broader historiography, the notion that elite Portuguese women lived restricted lives has been repeated and reinforced without much critique. Mafalda Soares da Cunha and Monteiro wrote that “foreign travellers corroborated the enclosure to which the ladies of the nobility were condemned in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries” (CUNHA, MONTEIRO 2011: 238). However, it is notable that these predominantly French texts engage in a pronounced orientalisising of Portuguese custom and practice. Negative presentations of Spain and Portugal by French authors has been well-documented (SAID 1979: 1-13).

Of course it is undeniable that the overwhelming messages that women in Portugal received – as elsewhere in Western Europe – reinforced a cultural myth that women were ontologically inferior and should therefore remain subordinated within society. Maria Antónia Lopes writes that women were: “Maintained in the greatest ignorance “bombarded” from all sides by the misogynist message which was transmitted by storytellers, moralists, theologians, preachers, missionaries, husbands and fathers, jurists and doctors” (LOPES 1989: 6)<sup>10</sup>.

Elite Portuguese women were constrained in a number of ways but what remains widely absent from the historiography is a broader analysis of the other avenues that were available to Portuguese women including economic power and positions within networks of power and influence.

In the seventeenth century, for example, many elite women played crucial roles in the defence of the newly sovereign kingdom during the War of Restoration (1640-1668)<sup>11</sup>. João IV corresponded with the marquesa de Ferreira and the condessa de Vidigueira who were raising troops and horses for the war effort from their Alentejan lands (COELHO 1940: 93). At the same king’s request, Ferreira mobilised her wealth to finance the fortification of the (still disputed) border town of Olivença/Olivenza (COELHO 1940: 23). In 1641, non-elite women entered the trenches with the men in the defence of this same border town (RELAÇAM 1641: fl.5v). The successful defence of another border town in the north – Monção – was attributed to Dona Mariana de Lencastre Vasconcelos e Câmara, condessa de Castelo Melhor. The conde de Ericeira, in his *História de Portugal Restaurado* (History of Restored Portugal – the first part

---

<sup>10</sup> “Mantidas na maior ignorância, “bombardeadas” de todos os lados pela mensagem misógina que transmitiam os contistas, moralistas, teólogos, sermonistas, missionários, maridos e pais, juristas e médicos”.

<sup>11</sup> The Kingdom of Portugal had been in personal union with the Kingdom of Spain for sixty years following Philip II of Spain’s acclamation to the throne of Portugal in 1581. The 1640-1668 conflict has come to be known as the *Guerra da Aclamação* or *da Restauração* (War of Acclamation or of Restoration).



of which was published in 1679), lauded the action that Castelo Melhor took in leading the repositioning of artillery that then hammered the Spanish army so heavily that it allowed the Portuguese time to regroup at a crucial moment. In Ericeira's words: "When they were in the tightest spot they benefitted from the prudence, and manly heart of the condessa de Castelo Melhor" (ERICEIRA 1751: 448)<sup>12</sup>. Of course this is merely a snapshot of a long and complex conflict and notes the roles of only a few women.

Independent or familial wealth furnished many elite women with significant economic power – as in the cases noted above. Portuguese women's access to economic power has been increasingly recognised. Darlene Abreu Ferreira has explored the important economic role of working women in detail within the fishing communities of northern Portugal (FERREIRA 2000: 7-23). Elite women coupled economic power with social power, and access to a network of similarly powerful individuals. A factor that will become apparent when we consider the roles of the two Marias.

As with other elite women of the era, it is not hard to find references to Soror Maria da Cruz and Dona Maria in archival sources held in Portugal as well as in both France and the UK. However, they have remained understudied or simply ignored. Both Marias lurk in the background of royal history and queenship studies, and yet their lives and actions have yet to be fully analysed and woven into those historiographies. These women remain almost entirely absent from Anglophone historiography which is a particular loss as Soror Maria da Cruz met with the English agents, diplomats and ambassadors including Edward Montagu, 1st Earl of Sandwich, Sir Richard Fanshawe, Sir Robert Southwell, Sir William Godolphin and Lionel Fanshawe. Sir Richard and Lord Sandwich in particular were responsible for negotiating the Treaty of Madrid (1667) that prepared the way for the Treaty of Lisbon (1668) that formally ended the war between Portugal and Spain.

Cavalheiro's mistake has been repeated throughout the historiography continuing to obscure both Marias. Hipólito Raposo quoted Cavalheiro in passing and repeating the claim that Dona Maria became Soror Maria da Cruz in his biography of Luísa de Guzmán (RAPOSO 1947: 206-207). In the 1979 *Descriptive List of the State Papers Portugal 1661-1780*, assembled by Charles R. Boxer, Soror Maria da Cruz is recorded accurately enough as "Sister Maria [de la Cruz]" – the letter in question is in Spanish and she signs using that variant of her name. However, Dona Maria is recorded as "Dona Maria [de la Cruz]" and so the fusion is repeated (BOXER 1979: 33, 67). In Joana Almeida

---

<sup>12</sup> "Quando andavão no mayor aperto lhes valeo a prudencia, e varonil coração da Condessa de Castello Melhor".

Troni's 2008 biography of Catherine of Braganza, the difference between Dona Maria and Soror Maria da Cruz *was* identified. However, these women are not central to Troni's excellent biography and so their roles are not fully explored. Troni comments on the piety of Soror Maria da Cruz and the helpfulness of Dona Maria in securing a convent place for one of the queen's English maids (TRONI 2008: 185-186, 227-230).

Ana Cristina Duarte Pereira discusses the fact that a marriage between Dona Maria and the 1st duque de Cadaval was mooted in an effort to avert a succession crisis in her analysis of Portuguese princesses and infantas (PEREIRA 2008: 70-72). In Monique Vallance's 2012 biography of Luísa de Guzmán, Cavalheiro's conflation is repeated but Vallance directly references Raposo rather than Cavalheiro (VALLANCE 2012: 87-88). Another biography of the same queen, also from 2012, co-authored by Maria Paula Marçal Lourenço and Ricardo Fernando Pinto repeats the same claim that Dona Maria took the name Maria da Cruz (LOURENÇO, PINTO 2012: 118). Neither women are mentioned in António Álvaro Dória's 1944 biography of the French queen-consort, Maria Francisca de Sabóia (DÓRIA 1944). A later analysis of the two wives of Pedro II published in 2011, did not misname Dona Maria and considered her – as Pereira did – within the discussions that surrounded the potential succession crisis in the 1670s. However, the same book misnamed Soror Maria da Cruz as *Maria do Céu* though correctly acknowledged her familial connection to the royal family through the House of Medina Sidonia (BRAGA, BRAGA 2011: 48, 118, 120, 290, 310, 328). Francisco Pardal offers a clear account of Dona Maria's life in his analysis of her material wealth (PARDAL 2022: 129-133).

It would be churlish to dismiss the cited works simply for the misrepresentation, or merging, of Dona Maria and Soror Maria da Cruz; that is *not* the intention of this article. These works were focused on making different historiographical contributions, they touched lightly upon Dona Maria and/or Soror Maria da Cruz repeating what has been assumed or only partially researched. The exceptions remain Pereira, and Pardal, along with Isabel Drummond Braga and Paulo Drummond Braga, who situated Dona Maria – however briefly – within a broader analysis of court politics and succession debates. This article seeks to push that analysis further by firmly situating both Soror Maria da Cruz and Dona Maria in the networks of political and diplomatic influence that stretched from Lisbon to London, and even to Madrid.



## 4. Cavalheiro's Collection

Cavalheiro's transcription of the sixty-two documents is faithful and almost entirely accurately reproduced; he even maintained the seventeenth-century orthography though he offered no additional editorial commentary to this spelling which is the contemporary norm. Cavalheiro did not arrange the letters chronologically, claiming that it was not possible owing to the lack of dates on several letters. Whilst this is true it will be shown that several letters, at least, can be dated with relative certainty. Cavalheiro arranged the documents into four groups: "a) Letters of royal people to Soror Maria da Cruz; b) Letters of Soror Maria da Cruz to royal people; c) Letters of Soror Maria da Cruz to the Duke [and Duchess] de Cadaval; d) Various documents" (CAVALHEIRO 1944: 22)<sup>13</sup>.

By making no attempt to arrange the documents chronologically it makes the collection, as a whole, harder to navigate and to immediately note patterns and themes that run between the different documents; further complicated by the central fact that these documents pertain to two separate people.

What evidence is there in Cavalheiro's collection that *Maria* is in fact two people? Firstly, in the valedictions Dona Maria signs *Dona Maria* and indicates that she is writing from *Santa Thereza* i.e. Carnide; Soror Maria da Cruz signs *Soror Maria* and writes *convento de Nossa Senhora da Quietação* or *convento de Alcântara* – though she indicated her location less frequently than Dona Maria. Secondly in the letters from Catherine of Braganza, the queen addressed Dona Maria as *irmã* and Soror Maria as *prima* – sister and cousin respectively. To fully appreciate the differences, however, one must read the letters in their original form; they are holographs and the orthography is distinct.

Of the total sixty-two documents, fifty-three are letters to or from Soror Maria da Cruz and Dona Maria. The remaining nine are a collection of documents that relate to Dona Maria's estate and her status. Only sixteen of the letters were holographs from Soror Maria. The information of the people to whom she wrote is laid out in Table 1.

---

<sup>13</sup> "a) Cartas de pessoas reais a Soror Maria da Cruz; b) Cartas de Soror Maria da Cruz para pessoas reais; c) Cartas de Soror Maria da Cruz para os Duques de Cadaval; d) Documentos vários".

**Table 1.** Letters sent from Soror Maria da Cruz

<i>Recipient</i>	<i>Number of letters</i>
Nuno Álvares Pereira de Melo, 1 <sup>st</sup> duque de Cadaval	14
Maria Angélica Henriqueta de Lorena, duquesa de Cadaval	1
<i>Joana de Faro, condessa de Tentúgal and Odemira</i> <sup>14</sup>	1

In the collection, there is only one letter that is written to Soror Maria da Cruz, see below.

**Table 2.** Letter sent to Soror Maria da Cruz

<i>Sender</i>	<i>Number of letters</i>
Catherine of Braganza, Queen of England	1

Twenty-five of the documents gathered by Cavalheiro were holographs from Dona Maria. Below is laid out a list of the people to whom she wrote.

**Table 3.** Letters sent from Dona Maria

<i>Recipient</i>	<i>Number of letters</i>
Nuno Álvares Pereira de Melo, 1 <sup>st</sup> duque de Cadaval	17
Pedro II, Prince Regent/King of Portugal	6
<i>Isabel Luísa Josefa, Princess of Beira, Infanta of Portugal (CAVALHEIRO 1944: 42)</i> <sup>15</sup>	1
Maria Sofia de Neuburgo, Queen of Portugal	1

In the collection, ten letters were written to Dona Maria and in Table 4 you can see who these individuals were.

<sup>14</sup> Cavalheiro identifies this letter as being sent to Maria Angélica Henriqueta de Lorena, duquesa de Cadaval but the dates disprove this assertion. Cadaval's young daughter, Dona Joana, seems the most likely candidate (SOUSA 1743: 342).

<sup>15</sup> “à Rainha D. Catarina de Inglaterra (?)”. Cavalheiro cautiously records this letter as sent to Catherine of Braganza; however I would suggest that the recipient is more likely Isabel Luísa Josefa, Princess of Beira.

**Table 4.** Letters sent to Dona Maria

<i>Sender</i>	<i>Number of letters</i>
Catherine of Braganza, Queen of England	4
Pedro II, Prince Regent/King of Portugal	2
João IV, King of Portugal	1
Afonso VI, King of Portugal	1
Maria Francisca de Sabóia, Queen of Portugal	1
<i>Isabel Luísa Josefa, Princess of Beira, Infanta of Portugal</i> <sup>16</sup>	1
Maria Sofia de Neuburgo, Queen of Portugal	1

As is clear from the tables above, many more letters from the collection were written from or to Dona Maria rather than Soror Maria da Cruz. Of course, Cavalheiro's collection is not a comprehensive collection of the letters written by and to these women but they do demonstrate that both were in correspondence with senior members of the royal family as well as the kingdom's senior nobleman – Cadaval.

Below are the nine remaining documents that are not letters. For those documents that have a date, I have indicated it and for those that do not I have either suggested one or simply placed it within a suggested chronological order.

**Table 5.** Documents pertaining to Dona Maria

<i>Date</i>	<i>Title</i>
1665	Confirmation of the gifts given to [Dona Maria] by João IV
	Formula for letters written to [Dona Maria]
1670s	Document for the Delegates of the Assembly
1670s	Paper for the Assembly
1682	Papal Brief written for [Dona Maria] from Innocent XI
	Form and way in which Maria Sofia should be with the <i>Senhora</i> Dona Maria
	Extract of [Dona Maria's] will
1693	Letter from Dona Luísa to Pedro II
	Articles of the defence against a case brought by the nuns at Chelas

<sup>16</sup> "Carta duma Infanta" (CAVALHEIRO 1944: 65). Recorded as from "an *infanta*". It can only be Isabel Luísa Josefa (only daughter of Pedro II and Maria Francisca de Sabóia) as she was the only *infanta* during Dona Maria's lifetime (SOUZA 1741: 447-452).

Soror Maria's letters in Cavalheiro's collection were all sent to Cadaval save for two. As was customary in early modern letter writing, she demonstrated great care for her recipient's health, opening one letter with: "My Duke and my Lord, concern for the throat pain of Your Excellency had me up with the larks" (CAVALHEIRO 1944: 26)<sup>17</sup>. In another letter she centres herself as a cog within the spiritual care for his welfare: "May Our Lord be so pleased to free Your Excellency from all complaints and [so] achieve many long and prosperous years of life and health for which this your *oradora* [one who prays] wishes" (CAVALHEIRO 1944: 51)<sup>18</sup>. Her concern was also focused on other members of Cadaval's family. We should read this concern in two primary ways that neither diminish nor exclude the other. Firstly, we must assume that Soror Maria was acquainted with members of Cadaval's household and held genuine affection for them. Secondly, this was a way in which Soror Maria could discursively place herself within Cadaval's household and in so doing, placing herself at his service but also under his protection. In a letter to Cadaval from July 1667, she requested news of his brother Dom Teodósio, who was "Canon of the Cathedral of Lisbon [and] Chaplain of Honour to the king Dom Afonso VI" (SOUSA 1755: 33), and his daughter Dona Joana de Faro "who – like everyone – I love" (CAVALHEIRO 1944: 53)<sup>19</sup>.

Cavalheiro identifies two of the letters from Soror Maria da Cruz as letters sent to Dona Maria Angélica Henriqueta de Lorena – Cadaval's second wife but the first of his two French wives. As noted in the footnote to Table 1, I have suggested that one of these letters should be re-labelled as sent to Cadaval's daughter, Dona Joana de Faro (1661-1669). The first letter, dated 1673, is certainly written to Dona Maria Angélica Henriqueta de Lorena. This is a simple letter to congratulate her on the safe delivery of her son (SOUSA 1755: 35). Alongside the letter Soror Maria sent a present: "I offer these flowers to Your Excellency to adorn [your] oratory the first time that Your Excellency goes there" (CAVALHEIRO 1944: 48)<sup>20</sup>. An ephemeral gift that has left no other historical imprint. The second letter appears later in Cavalheiro's arrangement but was actually written in 1667 meaning that it cannot be addressed to any duquesa de Cadaval and certainly not his second wife. Cadaval's first wife died in 1664 and Cadaval did not marry again until 1671. Therefore, we should as-

<sup>17</sup> "Meu Duque e meu Senhor o cuidado da dor de garganta de Vossa Excelencia me fas amanhese na Cotovia".

<sup>18</sup> "queira Nosso Senhor aproveite tanto que livre Vossa Excelencia de todas as queixas e logre dilatadissimos e prosperos annos a vida e saude que lhe deseja esta sua oradora".

<sup>19</sup> "D. Theodosio de Mello de Bragança, foy Conego na Sé de Lisboa, Sumilher da Cortina delRey D. Affonso VI", "dar-me particulares novas suas do senhor dom Theodosio e da senhora dona Joana que como a todos amo tanto".

<sup>20</sup> "Esas flores ofereso a Vossa Excelencia para se hornar o oratorio a primeira ves que Vossa Excelencia for a elle".

sume that Soror Maria was writing instead to his young daughter Dona Joana de Faro, condessa de Tentúgal and Odemira. Soror Maria writes: “I assure Your Excellency [that] I have a broken heart in the absence of our princes... the consideration of the solitude of Your Excellency, being parted from the Lord Duke, costs me no less” (CAVALHEIRO 1944: 55)<sup>21</sup>. As a condessa in her own right, Dona Joana was entitled to the styling of *Vossa Excelência* (Your Excellency), a rather grand styling for a girl of five or six but the correct one. However, this formality did not preclude a more intimate relationship, one that is evidenced in two further letters written to Cadaval in the summer of 1668. In early July, Soror Maria wrote of Dona Joana: “I kiss [her] hand and send these sweets for her to enjoy” – one wonders if these lasted half as long as the flowers for the duquesa’s oratory (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 27)<sup>22</sup>. On 31st August she wrote simply: “to [the] *senhora* Dona Joana, I send an embrace” (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 26)<sup>23</sup>.

In addition to the care that Soror Maria demonstrated in her writings she took a more active role in Cadaval’s familial arrangements when she took responsibility for one of Cadaval’s illegitimate daughters. Born in 1666, Dona Teresa Maria de Melo, entered Soror Maria’s convent when she was five (c.1671), professed in 1683 and eventually held the title of abbess (SOUZA 1743: 349)<sup>24</sup>. In an undated note, that concerns itself with the queen’s health, Soror Maria records her presence when she added, “Teresa kisses the hand of Your Excellency” (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 52)<sup>25</sup>. Dona Teresa’s mother is not recorded in the printed genealogies but she makes a brief appearance in another of Soror Maria’s letters, in which Soror Maria explained that: “her mother wrote this letter to me, that Your Excellency will see, asking me to be mediator so that Your Excellency might permit her licence to retire to this city as where she remains is unhealthy” (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 52)<sup>26</sup>.

The implications of this attempted mediation are fairly brutal. Cadaval had removed his daughter from her mother’s care and kept her from Lisbon. Soror Maria did not need to mediate for Dona Teresa’s mother, or rather there was

<sup>21</sup> “Prometo a Vossa Excelencia tenho o coração dividido nesta ausência dos nossos príncipes... não me custa menos a consideração da soledade de Vossa Excelencia vendose apartada do senhor duque”.

<sup>22</sup> “A senhora dona Joana beyo a mão e ofereso esas alcorsas para se desenfadar”.

<sup>23</sup> “a senhora dona Joana mando hum abraço”.

<sup>24</sup> “D. Theresa Maria de Mello, que nasceo a 19 de Junho do anno de 1666, que creando-se a idade de cinco annos no Mosteiro das Flamengas de Alcantara, junto a Lisboa, da primeira Regra de Santa Clara, nelle tomou o habito, e professou no anno de 1683, e depois foy Abbadessa”.

<sup>25</sup> “Theresa beya a mão a Vossa Excelencia”.

<sup>26</sup> “sua mai me escreveu esta carta que Vossa Excelencia vera pedindome fosse medianeira para que Vossa Excelencia se sirva permitirhe licença a recolherse nesta cidade que donde esta não tem saude”.

no material need for her to do so. Soror Maria's own mother's fate and identity remain unknown; might this mediation hearken to a particular feeling for the mothers of illegitimate daughters? For now, this must remain speculation as it is impossible to be conclusive on this particular point.

As suggested, Soror Maria's care for Cadaval's household was also a way for her to discursively place herself within that household and so under Cadaval's protection. By positioning herself in this way, Soror Maria was better placed to directly petition Cadaval. For example, in 1675, with the arrival of the Father Commissary General of the Franciscans in Lisbon, Soror Maria da Cruz asked Cadaval to continue his patronage of the current Provincial Father a certain Frei António dos Arcanjos (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 46)<sup>27</sup>. However, her petitions were not focused solely on the politics of her religious order, her convent or herself. Cadaval was the kingdom's premier noble who held many senior positions of courtly and political significance, including voting on the nomination of bishops (PAIVA 2006: 264). One of the major courtly roles that Cadaval occupied throughout his lifetime was that of *mordomo mor* (high steward) to successive queens (SOUSA 1755: 34; CARDIM 2011: 168)<sup>28</sup>. It was because of these roles that, in an undated letter to Cadaval, Soror Maria mentioned that she had written to the queen concerning "the vacancy of the Bishopric of Coimbra asking His Highness [Pedro, Prince Regent] if he had memory of my brother the padre Frei Domingos de Gusmão" (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 47)<sup>29</sup>. Soror Maria's brother (or rather half-brother) was another illegitimate child of the 9<sup>th</sup> Duke of Medina Sidonia (SOUSA 1755: 120-122, 122<sup>30</sup>). Though undated by Soror Maria, it is possible to date this letter to 1670 with relative certainty. Firstly, the diocese of Coimbra had lacked a bishop since the death of João Mendes de Távora in 1646. This coincided with the lack of a formal relationship between Rome and Lisbon due to the War of Restoration; this relationship was re-established formally in 1670 (PAIVA 2000: 158-163). During this rupture, there could be no papal approval for royal appointments to dioceses or archdioceses. Secondly, a letter from Soror Maria written on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1670 appears to have preceded this undated letter in which she seeks

<sup>27</sup> "pesolhe agora conteneue o favoresellos abonando suas pesoas e governo".

<sup>28</sup> "Mordomo mór das Rainhas Dona Maria Francisca, Dona Maria Sofia, e Dona Maria Anna de Austria", "no seio desse corpo de servidores domésticos do rei o protagonismo pertenceu, sempre, a duas principais figuras, o mordomo-mor e o camareiro-mor".

<sup>29</sup> "sobre a vacatura do bispado de Coinbra pedindo a Sua Alteza tivese memoria de meu irmão o padre Frei Domingos de Gusmão". Maria Francisca de Sabóia maintained the styling of queen even after her divorce from Afonso VI and her marriage to his brother Dom Pedro, Prince Regent.

<sup>30</sup> "Teve o Duque fóra do matrimonio a estes filhos... D. Fr. Domingos de Gusmão, havido em huma Senhora de grande qualidade".



Cadaval's help in writing to Maria Francisca de Sabóia as she claimed that she did not have the confidence to do so without permission (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 50)<sup>31</sup>. If we accept the dating of 1670, then it is clear that Soror Maria was petitioning her cousin the Prince Regent, through Cadaval and Maria Francisca de Sabóia, to elevate her half-brother to the bishopric of Coimbra. Her intercession was not successful; the bishopric went to Manuel de Noronha in December 1670. Frei Domingos was eventually awarded (briefly) the seat of Leiria in 1677 and then that of Évora in 1678 which he held until his death in 1689 (SOUSA 1755: 122); Maria Francisca de Sabóia turned out to be instrumental in securing this position (PAIVA 2006: 469-470). The brief lines of petition from Soror Maria da Cruz evidence a continued relationship between these illegitimate half-siblings who – whilst born in Spain – both achieved positions of influence in Portugal (COSTA 1694: 126). When Soror Maria died in January 1676, Frei Domingos wrote of her to Cadaval in Spanish: “My Cousin and my Lord, [I want to inform] Your Excellency how much I devoted myself to the *señora Soror María de la Cruz*, my sister [...] and what loving siblings we were” (BNF, Man., Portugais 31: fl.198)<sup>32</sup>.

Though she was unsuccessful in securing the bishopric of Coimbra for her half-brother, Soror Maria's ability as a petitioner or advocate was acknowledged by her cousin, the Queen of England. In 1669, Catherine of Braganza wrote to Soror Maria to ask her to speak in person to an English diplomat – Sir William Godolphin – who would be passing through Lisbon on his way to Madrid. The queen addressed Soror Maria's as *prima* (cousin) in the opening of the letter and referred to her throughout as *vós* (you) rather than any other styling. This was probably a way for the queen to sidestep the strictures of etiquette by using the more intimate language of family. She instructed Soror Maria to “with all frankness inform [Godolphin] of the claims that my cousin [Juan Claros Alonso Pérez de Guzmán, 11<sup>th</sup> Duke of Medina Sidonia (1642–1713)] and the heirs of the House of Medina Sidonia have” (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 56)<sup>33</sup>. It is within this letter that she signalled her respect for Soror Maria's ability when she wrote, “you would represent this to him better by your rhetoric” (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 57)<sup>34</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> “se podera o duque escrever a rainha minha senhora que eu fis presente a Sua Magestade o desejava mas que não tivera confiança para isto sem liçença”.

<sup>32</sup> “Primo y S.r mio, constando a VE lo mucho deví a la S.a Soror María dela Cruz mi herma (que goçe de Dios), y quan amantes hermanos eramos”.

<sup>33</sup> “com toda a llaneça o informeis de todas as pretenções que meu primo e os herdeiros da casa de Medina Sidonia tem”.

<sup>34</sup> “vos lho poderdes representar melhor polla vossa retorica”.

The majority of Dona Maria's letters from this collection are also sent to Cadaval and the main issue that Dona Maria raises in her letters is money, specifically that the Crown or its agents had failed to pay her annuity, and later that of her niece Dona Luísa. João IV left large sums of money for Dona Maria in his last will and testament with the intention that, in time, she should marry or profess monastic vows (SOUSA 1740: 257)<sup>35</sup>. Dona Maria's half-brothers committed the Crown to providing her with 4,000 cruzados (1.6 million réis) a year as well as gifts of 50,000 cruzados at different times – vast sums of money (ANTI, Ord. Carm. Des., Convento de Santa Teresa, Mç 3: fl.7r, SILVA 2001: 226). In addition to money, Dona Maria owned a fabulous array of silverware (PARDAL 2022: 144-145).

Whilst Dona Maria used her letters to petition Cadaval her tone was notably different to that of Soror Maria. On the subject of a certain *doutor* João Coelho who “has done several services for me and for this convent” she wrote: “I will be pleased that he should know the value of my intercession and will be pleased for all that Your Excellency will do in this” (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 25)<sup>36</sup>. This was still a petition but it was framed in much more direct – almost imperative – language. On another occasion Dona Maria wrote to Cadaval when she and her niece were in desperate need of money to complete some building works, having been unable to pay the workmen for five weeks. The work needed completing as it was “on the very convent and it cannot be left open because everything will be ruined if any rain comes”. Despite their great need, Dona Maria still wrote in a commanding way in which to extract financial assistance from Cadaval: “it is proper to the nobility of his blood and his piety to come to the aid of those who require his support” (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 33)<sup>37</sup>. An approach quite unlike Soror Maria's claims to early mornings of worry or to being Cadaval's *oradora*. It should not be too surprising that the formulation of Dona Maria petitions are more commanding than those of Soror Maria because Dona Maria's are not the letters of a subordinate to a superior – as in the case of Soror Maria to Cadaval. Dona Maria was entitled to the styling of *Vossa (Sua) Alteza* – Your (Her) Highness – and, simply put, in a society and culture that valued status, she outranked Cadaval (SOUSA 1740: 259)<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>35</sup> “porque ElRey cuidou em dar estado a esta filha”.

<sup>36</sup> “me tem feito alguns servisos e a este convento e terei gosto que elle conhesa o vallor da minha entresessão e ficarei agradecida a Vossa Excelência a tudo o que nisto obrar”.

<sup>37</sup> “ha sinco somanas que não se paga aos ofisiaes por não ter dinheiro e como a obra he sobre o mesmo convento não se pode dextrar em aberto porque tudo se arruinara vindo alguma chuva”, “he proprio da nobreza de seu sangue e da sua piedade acudir a quem se valeo de seu emparo”.

<sup>38</sup> “Era tratada pela Corte de Alteza”.

In spite of her acknowledged royal paternity, Dona Maria's relationship with the rest of the royal family was less clear cut. As an acknowledged daughter of João IV she was afforded honours and incomes however, her position and status were a double-edged sword. Illegitimacy had never precluded a place within the Portuguese royal succession; João I (1357-1433) the first king of the Avis Dynasty (1385-1580) was himself an illegitimate son (LENCASTRE 2012: 8)<sup>39</sup>. The possibility that Dona Maria, or any child she might bear, held rights of accession to the throne was an uncomfortable reality.

By the 1670s, it was becoming clear that the Prince Regent and his wife Maria Francisca de Sabóia were unlikely to have any more children. A document was produced which discussed the potential role that Dona Maria could play in the continuation of the dynasty. With so few claimants to the throne available, Dona Maria's status as a daughter of a king took greater significance.<sup>40</sup> The anonymous document is entitled *Papel dos Procuradores de Côrtes sobre casar o duque de Cadaval com a Senhora Dona Maria*/Document for the Delegates of the Assembly concerning the marriage of the duque de Cadaval with the *Senhora* Dona Maria. Its intention was to provide a possible solution to the "conservation of the monarchy" and the "succession of the crown" (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 43-45, 43<sup>41</sup>). At the time of the document the royal family consisted of the Prince Regent, his wife and their only child the *infanta* Isabel Luísa Josefa, Princess of Beira. The problem – as defined by this document – was that there was little probability of another child being born to the royal couple and therefore Isabel Luísa Josefa would inherit the throne and a husband would need to be found. Such a husband would most likely be foreign and this had the potential of inviting further problems that might threaten the safety and recently-won sovereignty of Portugal. The remedy – according to the document's author – was that Dona Maria should marry Cadaval, himself a descendant of a royal scion. Their children would carry the requisite – and presently rare – royal blood. One of these imagined children might then marry a child of Isabel Luísa Josefa. Previously, this idea had been discussed between Cadaval and Padre António Vieira as evidenced by a letter written from Rome by the priest, in 1669. The subject of the letter is Cadaval's marriage prospects and after presenting a number of Italian prospects Vieira writes that Cadaval should marry quickly and that: "Your Excellency should complete the Carnide business by the best possible routes until you establish

<sup>39</sup> The Bragança family itself was descended from an illegitimate child of João I – Afonso I, duque de Bragança.

<sup>40</sup> By this point, Afonso VI was living in exile, the Queen of England had given up her claims and there were no more surviving siblings – even João IV's siblings had all died.

<sup>41</sup> "conçervação da monarchia", "sucessão da coroa".

success, or disappointment” (VIEIRA 1735: 200-201)<sup>42</sup>.

The suggestion that Dona Maria should marry Cadaval was met with a certain coolness by the Queen of England. Gaspar de Abreu, the Portuguese envoy, reported that the queen’s response to the idea was simply: “It seems to me that Dona Maria wishes to be a nun” (PEREIRA 2008: 73)<sup>43</sup>. Troni argues that this was not because of a lack of love between the queen and Dona Maria but rather that there was considerable tension between the Queen of England and Cadaval (TRONI 2008: 229-230). Although it is also feasible that the queen was aware of Dona Maria’s true feelings on the subject. In the marriage market, Pereira writes that Dona Maria “was always a [game] piece to be considered by various political factions”; she notes that Afonso VI even considered marrying his half-sister to Don Juan de Austria (1629-1679) – Philip IV of Spain’s illegitimate son (PEREIRA 2008: 70)<sup>44</sup>. Despite these ideas, Dona Maria remained unwed.

Dona Maria was always careful to show her support for, and respect to, the senior branch of the royal family. Considering the suggestions that had swirled around a possible marriage between her and Cadaval, this demonstrates an awareness of how her position might be manipulated to present a threat to the legitimate line. Conscious of this uncertain familial position, Dona Maria’s letters to various members of the royal family were carefully constructed mis-sives of compliment that not only reinforced her intimacy with the family but also her obedience to it. After Pedro II’s second wife arrived in Portugal from Heidelberg, Dona Maria sent her a gift which was presented to the new queen consort by Cadaval. Dona Maria Sofia de Neuburgo (1666–1699), Queen of Portugal 1687–1699, wrote to Dona Maria on 9th September 1687: “The muff, that was presented to me by [Cadaval] on your behalf, greatly pleased me, and more than anything I wish to thank you with an embrace, as soon as time permits” (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 64)<sup>45</sup>.

Dona Maria wrote to Maria Sofia de Neuburgo, following the birth of a prince, likely written in 1688 and so congratulating the queen on the birth of her first, tragically short-lived, son: “[Dona Luísa and I] ask God that the health and life of Your Majesty be very long so that He might give us many

---

<sup>42</sup> “O que supposto, e ser necessario que V Exc. caze quanto mais depressa, o que parece à Senhora Duqueza (e eu tambem o julgara, como creado de V Exc.) he que V. Exc. pelas melhores vias devia apertar o negocio de Carnide athè averiguar o effeito, ou o desengano”.

<sup>43</sup> “Pareçe me que Dona Maria quer ser freira”.

<sup>44</sup> “foi sempre uma peça a considerar por parte das várias facções políticas”.

<sup>45</sup> “O regalo que de vossa parte me apresentou o duque, estimei muito, e mais que tudo podervolo agradecer com hum abraço, logo que o tempo me der lugar”.

heirs for the preservation of this monarchy” (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 58)<sup>46</sup>. When news reached Dona Maria that Maria Sofia might be paying her a visit, she sent a note to Cadaval, keen to be given more details about the upcoming visit: “I have news that the Queen, my Lady, wishes to do me the honour of coming to this house; might Your Excellency advise me so that I may be certain of the day” (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 35)<sup>47</sup>. Dona Maria passed on this careful positioning of herself in relation to the senior royal family to her niece, Dona Luísa – Pedro II’s illegitimate daughter. In one surviving letter from Dona Luísa to the queen-consort Maria Sofia a second hand takes over in places to make corrections and to write the valediction in full – a hand that is very similar to that of Dona Maria (BNF, Man., Portugais 32: fl.15r-v)

In addition to compliment, Dona Maria could be called upon to help the royal family. An extraordinary letter from the Queen of England demonstrates the crucial position that Dona Maria occupied in a network of Roman Catholic ladies. Just as with Soror Maria, the Queen of England used familial language avoiding the rigidity of formal styling. She styled Dona Maria as *irmã* and throughout her letters referred to her as *vós* (you) as opposed to *Vossa Alteza* (Your Highness); likewise Pedro II greeted her as simply *Honrada D[on]a M[ari]a minha Irmã* – Honoured Dona Maria my sister. The queen’s principal motive for writing was to ask her half-sister to take an English girl into her care who the queen had raised “with the intention that she be a nun” (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 65)<sup>48</sup>. The chronicle of the Franciscans in Portugal records that this girl was born into an Anglican family but who converted to Roman Catholicism and eventually took vows at Madre de Deus, Lisbon where she took the name Soror Helena da Cruz (BELÉM 1755: 327-356). The chronicle records that she arrived in Portugal in the same year that Afonso VI married Maria Francisca de Sabóia which was in 1666 – thus offering a date for the letter. Dona Maria was not the only lady that the queen included in her plan, as she wrote in the letter: “The condessa de Redondo will give you more particular details” (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 65-66)<sup>49</sup>. Was this evidence of the Queen of England’s active Roman Catholic evangelism and convent recruitment? James E. Kelly writes that during the sixteenth century it was “priests, covertly ministering in England, [who] were involved in the transfer of potential postulants to mainland Europe”. This recruitment:

<sup>46</sup> “pedimos a Deus que a saude e vida de Vossa Magestade seja mui dilatada para que nos de muitos erdeiros para conservasão desta monarquia”.

<sup>47</sup> “tenho por noticias que a rainha minha senhora me quer fazer merce de vir a esta caza queira Vossa Excelencia avizarme tanto que souber a serteza do dia”.

<sup>48</sup> “criei huma menina ingleza com intecão de que fosse religioza”.

<sup>49</sup> “A condessa de Redondo vos hade dar mais particulares notícias”.

never really recovered after the English Civil War, which is somewhat surprising as it is usually argued that Catholic existence was easier under Charles II, at least until the wave of executions that followed the fabricated Popish Plot of the late 1670s (KELLY 2020: 24-26).

As Kelly notes, Titus Oates's allegations of a sectarian inspired assassination plot were a complete fiction; however, as the Queen of England's letter to Dona Maria evidences, the queen *was* involved in the conversion and transportation of an English subject from both the Anglican faith to the Roman Catholic, and from England to Portugal. This letter also evidences the trust that the queen had with her half-sister considering the political risks that the queen was taking in making such arrangements.

Whilst Dona Maria did have good relations with her half-siblings this did not prevent her from writing a furious tirade to the Prince Regent in 1682 about money owing to her from João IV's will. This particular letter is an example of how a transcribed version might make the text clearer to read but, in so doing, dull the other ways that we might analyse the document. In comparison to Dona Maria's other surviving letters this is by far the longest but it is also the one in which she takes the least time, and allows the least space, to make her salutation and valediction. In the holograph, the traditional closing, "I kiss the Royal Hands of Y[our] H[ighness]", is squeezed into the bottom of the page where *Vossa Alteza* is contracted to VA (BNP, Portugais 27: fl.49v)<sup>50</sup>. In Cavalheiro's version, this valediction is given plenty of space and he chose to spell out *Vossa Alteza* with no indication that he was expanding the contracted form (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 40). This editorial decision disguises the physicality of Dona Maria's letter writing, the stresses that may have imbued the very formation of her words and phrases not to mention the effects on her usually elegant hand. Crucially, this letter demonstrates Dona Maria's firm understanding of her financial situation and the inheritances that had been bequeathed to her. In 1677, the Prince Regent had written to his half-sister – a copy of which is held at the British Library, London. The prince assured Dona Maria that:

I have ordered you to be given all the money that refer to you from the word of the will of the king, my lord and our father (who is in glory), and António Cavide's declarations, alongside those payments of money that were given in interest. (BL, Add MS 15170, p.268)<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>50</sup> "Beijo as Reaes Mãos de VA".

<sup>51</sup> "mandei ordenar vos mandasse entregar todo o d.ro que da berba do testamento delRey meu S.r e nosso Pay q santa gloria haga, e declarações de Antonio Cabide constou vos tocava, e juntam.te aquelles redditos do d.ro que estava dado a juro".



Dona Maria's letter of 1682 claims that in spite of the Prince Regent's order, her money had never been paid.

There was no discernible difference in the ways in which Soror Maria da Cruz and Dona Maria made their petitions versus those employed by legitimate noblewomen. In many cases Cadaval was petitioned as a middleman considering his seniority at the Portuguese court and his occupation of numerous important offices. In 1720, Dona Luísa Bernarda Telo de Vasconcelos petitioned Cadaval – in his role as *mordomo mor* of the queen's household – for a habit of the Order of Christ for any future husband of hers and an annuity for herself of 100 mil réis, as reward for her service as *moça de câmara* (maid of the bedchamber). In this instance Dona Luísa Bernarda was not considered worthy of such an income and Cadaval suggested an annuity of 60 mil réis instead (BNP, Man., Portugais 35, fl.98). What both Marias could do that Dona Luísa Bernarda could not was to petition or write to members of the royal family directly. Whilst they may have been illegitimate, their connection to the royal family gave them scope for intercession and petition that were not open to all.

Soror Maria da Cruz and Dona Maria both used letter writing to affect change, to petition influential people, or to intercede for people under their care or who may have requested their help. However, the approaches, intentions and writing styles of these women were different for several reasons. One of these overarching reasons was the difference in relational dynamics that Soror Maria and Dona Maria had with the royal and noble families. Soror Maria was related to the royal family through Luísa de Guzmán and as an illegitimate niece she did not have the direct claim to royal kinship that Dona Maria had as daughter of a Portuguese king. As noted above Soror Maria positioned herself as a servant to the royal family and a subordinate to Cadaval. In this way, Soror Maria made gentle requests and sought the support of her influential correspondents. Because of her subordinate position she offered no threat to the new dynasty but rather could act as a diplomatic intermediary. Dona Maria's legally defined status emboldened her to write in a more commanding tone to Cadaval, and even to dare to show her anger to the then Prince Regent. At the same time, this status and kinship with the royal family were a blessing and a curse. Whilst she may have been afforded great respect and wealth, she – alongside any child of her body – was also viewed as a potential threat to the supremacy of the senior branch of the family.

## 5. Additional Sources

Beyond the letters collected by Cavalheiro there are several others held within archival collections in the UK. In both those collected by Cavalheiro and those held in the UK there are suggestions of further letters that have yet to be uncovered. There are almost certainly other letters that have yet to come to light from, or to, either Soror Maria or Dona Maria.

At the National Archives, Kew, there are three holographs addressed to Charles II (1630-1685), King of England 1660-1685. The one from Dona Maria was written in Portuguese in January 1667. It appears to be the first of such letters, Dona Maria wrote: “My words are too limited in order to thank Your Majesty for the honour and favour that he has done in permitting me his news”. It is a short letter of compliment in which Dona Maria hopes: “that Your Majesty knows my soul and the care with which I beseech Our Lord [for] the life and health of Your Majesty” (NA, SP 89/8/4: fl.6)<sup>52</sup>.

It is possible that Charles II had waited until after his mother-in-law’s death – in 1666 – before writing to his wife’s illegitimate half-sister so as not to cause offence. It is probably unsurprising that Dona Maria did not have a close relationship with her father’s wife and queen. The very presence of Dona Maria at Carnide prevented Luísa de Guzmán from retiring to the convent there.<sup>53</sup> Her husband’s daughter was the all too real reminder of her husband’s many infidelities from the early days of their marriage that continued throughout her multiple pregnancies – not all of which resulted in live births (RÊGO 1995: 40<sup>54</sup>; COSTA, CUNHA 2008: 170<sup>55</sup>). Writing on her retirement the queen noted: “My inclination dictates that the convent should be that of Santa Teresa. To this I say that in Carnide there is the difficulty of Dona Maria” (ANTI, Man. Liv., No. 380: fl.2v)<sup>56</sup>.

Briefly, she considered a Dominican convent (Bom Sucesso) but as it was on the coast it was rejected as being too dangerous. Ultimately, Luísa de Guzmán founded a Discalced Augustinian convent into which she retired (ERICEIRA 1759: 188-189; ABLANCOURT 1701: 131).

The other two letters held at Kew are both written from Soror Maria da Cruz in Castilian Spanish, dated 1662 and 1663 (NA, SP 89/5/81: fl.117, SP

<sup>52</sup> “Mui limitadas são as minhas palavras p.a agradecer a VMg.de a honrra e merçe q me ha feito em me permitir novas suas”, “q VMg.de conhesa meu animo e o cudado com q peso a nosso Snor a vida e saude de VMg.de”.

<sup>53</sup> The widowed queen had been ousted from government and had chosen – or was encouraged – to withdraw to a convent.

<sup>54</sup> “a duquesa se sentia que a delícia do duque seu marido não parava nos teatros”.

<sup>55</sup> “procurou consolo em outras damas que circulavam pelo paço”.

<sup>56</sup> “Mi inclinacion me dita q el Convento sea de Sta Tereza. Aesta digo, q en Carnid ay la dificultad de Doña Maria”.

89/6/46: fl.87). In the first, Soror Maria expresses customary feelings of love and devotion for the king, signing off as “your faithful slave”. In the latter part of the letter, she writes that the only cure for not being in the king’s presence (which she never had been nor ever would be) was “the antidote of news from Your Majesty” (NA, SP 89/5/81: fl.117)<sup>57</sup>. The second letter runs in a similar vein though it evidences that the king had written to her, Soror Maria referred to “your letter which I have put under my eyes so many times” (NA, SP 89/6/46: fl.87)<sup>58</sup>. Currently, of this letter (or letters?) from Charles II there is no sign. From these letters held at Kew, two points are apparent. Firstly, Soror Maria da Cruz appears to have been involved in the dissemination and sharing of information between various political actors to which we shall return. Secondly, Soror Maria da Cruz demonstrates an ability to write in both Spanish and Portuguese, which was not at all uncommon, especially amongst the Portuguese nobility and the educated. This had much to do with many centuries of cultural exchange between Spain and Portugal, particularly with regards to poetry, music and theatre. In the prologue to Dona Bernarda Ferreira de Lacerda’s *Soledades de Buçaco* the author wrote: “I write in Spanish because it is a clear and almost communal language” (LACERDA 1634: Prólogo)<sup>59</sup>. It is presumably for this same reason that in 1662 when a description was written of the celebrations in Lisbon on the departure of Catherine of Braganza for England it was published in Spanish (ANON 1662). There was an awareness amongst the Portuguese when one muddled or mixed their language with another and which they expressed with very particular vocabulary. In a letter from the Queen of England to Dona Maria, the queen demonstrated such an awareness. Just before her valediction, the queen wrote a brief apology: “my Portuguese is already so *enxacoco* [muddled] due to lack of use, that because of this I will beg your forgiveness” (CAVALHEIRO 1940: 67)<sup>60</sup>. There is no satisfactory direct translation for *enxacoco* in English – muddled has to suffice. *Enxacoco* means “to confuse the language of [one’s] fatherland with a foreign [one]” (BLUTEAU 1713: 164)<sup>61</sup>, or “mixing one language with another” (SILVA 1789: 519)<sup>62</sup>.

The Queen of England had a facility with both Spanish and Portuguese, letters from her mother were written in Spanish and she is known to have re-

<sup>57</sup> “su fiel esclaba”, “el contraveneno de nuevas de VMg<sup>dad</sup>”.

<sup>58</sup> “sus letras las quales puse sobre mis ojos muchisimas besas”.

<sup>59</sup> “escribo en Castellano por ser Idioma claro, y casi cômun”.

<sup>60</sup> “o meu portugues he ja tão enxacoco pollo poco uzo, que ate isso uos eide pedir perdão”.

<sup>61</sup> “Fallar enxacoco. *Patrium cum alieno sermonem confundere*”.

<sup>62</sup> “Fallar enxacoco, misturando huma lingua com outra”.

plied to certain French ambassadors in Spanish (RAPOSO 1947: 413-440<sup>63</sup>; BNF, Man., Français 22787: fl.25<sup>64</sup>). No letter is known – at the moment – in which Dona Maria writes in Spanish. This does not mean that Dona Maria had no aptitude or skill with Spanish, the library at Carnide contained a large quantity of books that were in Spanish and were printed during or before Dona Maria's lifetime; it is safe to assume that many would have been there during her time. After the state took control of the convent in the nineteenth century, an inventory of its possessions was taken between 1891 and 1892. During this process the books at Carnide were inventoried, the first seven books on the list were all published in Spanish, the very first item was a 1681 edition of the *Mystica ciudad* [sic] *de Dios* written by the Spanish Conceptionist nun Sor María de Jesús de Ágreda. Whilst the text was in Spanish it had been printed in Lisbon (ANTT, Min. Fin, Convento de Santa Teresa, Cx. 1983: fl.82-90). At the very least, Dona Maria would have been exposed to spiritual writings and histories written in Spanish.

At the Bodleian Library, Oxford, there are two letters written by Soror Maria da Cruz to Edward Montagu, 1st Earl of Sandwich during his tenure as Ambassador Extraordinary to Madrid<sup>65</sup>. One of Sandwich's letters to Soror Maria is also held within this collection (Bodleian, MS. Carte 75: fl.460, fl.462r-v, fl.481). The diplomat, Sir Robert Southwell, acted as Sandwich's postman to Soror Maria on at least one occasion, "I received your letter from the hand of *Don Roberto Southvel*" (Bodleian, MS. Carte 75: fl.460)<sup>66</sup>. All three letters were written in 1666, prior to the completion of the Treaty of Madrid, and like the letters to Charles II, these letters were also written in Spanish. Unlike the Queen of England and the Prince Regent (later King of Portugal), Sandwich referred to Soror Maria as *Excelentísima Señora* – Most Excellent Lady – and *Vuestra Excelencia* – Your Excellency (Bodleian, MS Carte 75: fl. 462r-v). Despite this formal styling, it is possible to read a flirtation into the letter that Sandwich sent to Soror Maria, there is a quality to the language that conceivably goes beyond the bounds of polite letter writing. Certainly, courtly rhetoric is discursively present. Sandwich wrote how happy he was that she had granted him permission to send letters to her "most pure hands"; he wrote how he longed for a resolution of the negotiations and for wings to carry him

<sup>63</sup> The originals are held at the Biblioteca da Ajuda and the Universidade de Coimbra.

<sup>64</sup> "le même jour apres midi de la Reina douairiere d'Angletere, je lui parlay en Fransois elle me repondit en Espagnol".

<sup>65</sup> Sandwich took over from Sir Richard Fanshawe in Madrid in May 1666 to complete the Treaty of Madrid, signed in May 1667.

<sup>66</sup> "Resebi Su papel de mano de don Roberto Southvel".

to her presence; he wrote how he would practise: “this Language: so that I might find myself more capable of the contentment and the satisfaction that always accompany the sweet Conversation of Your Excellency” (Bodleian, MS Carte 75: fl.462r-v)<sup>67</sup>. There is certainly an implied longing in the text that is imaginatively portrayed. If this were evidence of light flirtation, Sandwich would not be the last English visitor to do so with nuns in Lisbon. When the Duke of Grafton accompanied Pedro II’s second wife, Maria Sofia, to the city it is recorded that “accompanied by several Captains of his fleet, [he] was eager to touch the hands &c. of the Nuns of *Odivelas*” – the enigmatic “&c.” leaving much to the imagination (LAHONTAN 1704: 127)<sup>68</sup>.

More letters from Sandwich would be required to make any more conclusive statements on the quality of their relationship. Equally, it would be an overreach to conclude – from the existing documents – that Soror Maria was involved directly in the mediation of the Treaty of Madrid. However, the fact that every British agent involved in the process passed through her convent, met with her, carried letters for her combined with her kinship with the Queen of England, the royal family in Portugal and the nobility of Spain, should count for something. As noted above, we know from Cavalheiro’s collection that the Queen of England at least respected her skills of rhetoric (CAVALHEIRO 1944: 56-57). Soror Maria da Cruz should be considered an important node and useful communicator within the network of people who facilitated peace on the Iberian peninsula. Furthermore, Soror Maria’s role as spiritual intercessor should also be included in this picture. Her prayers were directed towards the resolution of the peace process and the reality of their efficacy for early modern actors cannot be diminished. Spiritual intercession combined with church or monastic ritual were not separated from political or diplomatic action. The marqués de Alegrete would receive his title thanks to the happy conclusion of the marital contract in Heidelberg for Pedro II’s second marriage; this success was widely accepted as being contingent on the intercession of his sister – the abbess at Madre de Deus (ANON 1700: 170; SOUSA 1688). Allusion to prayer was not simple rhetoric and so when Soror Maria wrote to Sandwich, “I ask God for order so that it may be for the benefit of the two Kingdoms”, she was not only articulating a desire but also claiming her place within the diplomatic process in her role as spiritual intercessor (Bodleian, MS Carte 75:

<sup>67</sup> “empieço á gozar de la licença que V.E ha sido servida conçeder á que mis Cartas puedan llegarse á sus purissimas manos... La Brevedad con que (espero) llegaran los Publicos Negoçios al termino que se desseea, me servira de alas para pasarme quanto antes á la Presençia de VE... aprender este Lenguage; para que... me halle mas capaz del contento & satisfaçion que siempre acompañan á la dulce Conversaçion de VE.a”.

<sup>68</sup> “Milord Grafton suivi de quelques Capitaines de sa flotte, eut la curiosité de toucher les mains &c. des Religieuses d’*Odivelas*”.

fl.481)<sup>69</sup>. This role was also acknowledged by an eighteenth-century source in which Soror Maria was meant to have: “asked [Luísa de Guzmán] to be served to give her leave to stay in this Monastery, in which to serve God, praying to the same Lord for the State, and augmentation of Her Majesty, and for all the Royal House” (SANTA MARIA 1744: 25)<sup>70</sup>.

Whether or not she asked this question, Soror Maria da Cruz was memorialised as a nun dedicated to the betterment of the state and royal family.

## 6. Portraits

Cavalheiro wrote how he hoped that a faithful portrait of his subject might be drawn. A few contemporaneous writers left impressions of Soror Maria and Dona Maria that help flesh out the impressions left by the surviving documentation. There are extant sketches of Soror Maria da Cruz provided by a mix of Italian and English observers. The first is from the memoirs of Ann, Lady Fanshawe. In 1662, Lady Fanshawe met Soror Maria da Cruz and recorded in her memoir that:

The Abadessa of the Alcantara [sic], niece to the Queen-Mother, natural daughter of the Duke de Medina Sidonia, sent, to welcome me into the country, a very noble present of perfumes, waters and sweetmeats, and during my abode in Lisbon we often made visits and interchanged messages, to my great content, for she was a very fine lady (FANSHAWE 1907: 106).

When the ambassadorial family returned to England in 1664, Soror Maria bade farewell to Sir Richard in a letter in which she referred to one of his daughters – *mi preziosa Margarita*/my darling Margaret – “to whom I send this toy cart”; Soror Maria certainly understood the importance of gift giving (Barking and Dagenham Arch., NR90/248)<sup>71</sup>. In 1668, following a meeting with Soror Maria da Cruz, Sir Bernard Gascoigne (né Bernardino Guasconi) wrote to the Queen of England that:

I have found her to be a Lady of a very great witt and most excellent conversation, and I would have given much that your M[ajesty] could have

---

<sup>69</sup> “pido a dios de horden p.a que sea en provecho de los dos Reinos”.

<sup>70</sup> “pedia a Sua Magestade quizesse ser servida de lhe dar licença para ficar naquele Mosteiro, se servir nelle a Deos, rogando ao mesmo Senhor pelo Estado, e aumento de Sua Magestade, e de toda a casa Real”.

<sup>71</sup> “mi preziosa margarita a quien enbio esa carrosilla”.



heard, with how much mirth and how wee passed 3 houres times ... I was persuaded that ye vivacity of her witt, and her galant way of speaking did proceed much from ye length of time that shee had lived and that shee was in age; but att her appearance to ye Doore I found her handsome and fresch.

From the same letter, Gascoigne records that Soror Maria had asked whether the periwig he wore was his own hair. Gascoigne told her that it was not and removed it to show his true hair “which caused much laughter”. He was then encouraged to put the wig “upon a great old bald saint that was placed within ye dore of ye Porteria [...] to which most readily I made a very devout present, and returned without itt” (BL, Add MS 38850: fl.19v-fl.20). Another Italian visitor to Lisbon provides us with another glimpse. According to Lorenzo Magalotti, Cosimo de’Medici (future Grand Duke of Tuscany) was impressed by this royal cousin and Magalotti recorded that she was “very young in appearance, and with a manner not unbecoming to a royal person” (RIVERO, RIVERO 1933: 271)<sup>72</sup>. These impressions help shape a sense of Soror Maria. Her letters evidence a capable and educated woman who was adept at managing the important relationships within her influential and well-connected social network as well as demonstrating a caring nature towards the families, particularly children, within her circle. However, the impressions left by others present evidence which is hard to mine from holographs; Soror Maria comes across as a charming and amusing individual.

Concerning her role as a political or diplomatic actor, it is hard to truly define Soror Maria’s role. However, in 1676, Francis Parry (English resident in Lisbon) reported her death to Henry Coventry, the Secretary of State for the Southern Department writing: “Donna Maria de Guzman Cosen German to her maj[es]ty our Queene, a Nunn of the Flemish monastery at Alcantra died ye beginning of the month” (NA, SP 89/13/78: fl.139). Why would a member of the diplomatic corps report the death of a Portuguese nun? One answer would be that she was the Queen of England’s first cousin – or “Cosen German” to use Parry’s language. On the other hand, considering the frequency with which Soror Maria da Cruz met with foreign dignitaries from the Fanshawe family and the Earl of Sandwich to Cosimo de’Medici, we must assume that Soror Maria da Cruz was an acknowledged node within a network of international diplomacy – by the English at the very least.

A more complete portrait of Dona Maria is harder to define though further evidence exists of the honours paid to her and the respect shown. Dona Maria’s

---

<sup>72</sup> “assai giovane, di aspetto, e di maniere non disdicevoli a persona reale”.

status was respected throughout her life and even in death this respect was demonstrated. However, this respect was closely managed and appears to have insulated Dona Maria from being written about in a way that might allow us to understand how she was viewed separate to her royal lineage. Dona Maria's royal status was acknowledged not just by João IV's recognition and the styling of *Vossa Alteza* but also by the right she had to make use of royal arms, a right she shared with other *infantas* of Portugal. On the frontispiece of Padre Manuel Fernandes's *Alma Instruída* there is an image of the *infanta* Isabel Luísa Josefa. At the base of the engraving there is an impaled coat of arms, the dexter side is blank whilst the sinister side shows the royal arms of Portugal (FERNANDES 1699: Frontispiece). The blank dexter side was awaiting the arms of the royal house into which she would marry, though the *infanta* died unmarried. As main patron of the convento de São João da Cruz, Dona Maria's arms were displayed on the frontispiece of the *Livro da fundação do Real Convento de Carnide* (Book of the Foundation of the Royal Convent of Carnide); the dexter side shows the royal arms of Portugal whilst the sinister shows the arms of the Discalced Carmelite order. A symbol that seems to present a union between the royal house of Portugal and the family of Carmel (ANTT, *Livro da fundação*: Frontispiece).

As noted, the relationship with her half-siblings appears to have been, broadly, good; tantalisingly, Virgínia Rau suggested that Catherine of Braganza may have owned a portrait of Dona Maria in the garb of a Carmelite (RAU 1947: 83). However, it is certain that Dona Maria's position as an illegitimate member of the royal family was a source of stress which was compounded by an insecurity in her incomes (however large) and constraints on her movements. In the *Historia Genealogica da Casa Real Portuguesa* the authors recorded the visit that Maria Francisca de Sabóia made to Carnide so that "the formality with which kings [and queens] are accustomed to honour their siblings, even if illegitimate" be known (SOUSA 1740: 258)<sup>73</sup>. Dona Maria greeted Maria Francisca in the interior part of the gate house on her knees, the queen raised her up, embraced her, and then they went to the chapel to pray together. They then went to take refreshments in Dona Maria's rooms where Dona Maria took the position of a duchess in relation to where the queen sat (SOUSA 1740: 258-259). Whilst this meeting afforded Dona Maria great honour it was also highly stage managed, this was a meeting that had to be controlled and regulated. Hers was not an easy relationship to maintain. Financial troubles created tensions in the relationship with Pedro II. Her concerns about this relationship with her half-brother were written into her will. Of her brother she wrote:

---

<sup>73</sup> "se saiba a formalidade, com que os Reys costumaõ honrar aos seus irmãos, ainda que illegítimos".

To the King Dom Pedro my Lord, and brother – may God preserve him – I ask him to forgive me the troubles that I have caused him, and with all the affection in my heart I thank him for the favours that I have always received from his magnanimity (CAVALHEIRO 1944: 16).<sup>74</sup>

These insecurities concerning income and familial relations were key stresses in her life that may have contributed to a worsening of Dona Maria's mental health. There were contemporaneous concerns about Dona Maria's health, identified using the early modern term of melancholy. It would break the Goldwater rule to attempt a psychological analysis of Dona Maria with the distance of years and difference of terminology. Dom Luís da Cunha (who knew Dona Maria personally) recorded: "[she] entered such a melancholy that she began to say that she despaired of her salvation [...] what followed is that the friars said that a malignant spirit had entered her, and they began to exorcise her following the rites of the church" (SILVA 2001: 227)<sup>75</sup>.

Whether possessed or not, whether suffering from what we might conceivably interpret as an episode (or chronic period) of mental ill-health, or not, Dona Maria ultimately died on 6th February 1693. By the standards of the Roman Catholic church, Dona Maria was afforded a good death. In 1682, she had received a papal brief from Innocent XI (1611-1689, pontiff from 1676) in which it was stated: "if you invoke the name of Jesus devoutly with [your] mouth; or not being able to with [your] mouth, with your heart; mercifully, by the Lord, we grant you plenary indulgence; and remission of all your sins" (CAVALHEIRO 1944: 67)<sup>76</sup>.

By the standards of funerary honours, Dona Maria received all respect. We are told that following her death the king withdrew for five days and wore mourning for a month (SOUSA 1740: 260). Meanwhile, her body was laid to rest in a truly magnificent tomb of inlaid marble that can still be seen in the lower choir at Carnide. A Latin inscription proclaims her royal father and is further emblazoned with an elongated diamond bearing the royal arms of Portugal – on this occasion, *not* impaled by the arms of the Discalced Carmelites. However, Dona Maria's final resting place is miles from both the original pantheon at Belém as well as the later one at São Vicente de Fora. This illegitimate *infanta* was kept in death as she was in life, honoured but far away from the legitimate family.

<sup>74</sup> "A El-Rey D. Po meu Sor, e irmão que D.s G.de, pesso me perdoe as molestias que lhe houver cauzado, e com todo o affecto do meu coração lhe agradeço os favores que sempre recebi de sua grandeza".

<sup>75</sup> "entrou em tal melancolia que começou a dizer que desesperava da sua salvação... de que se seguiu dizerem os frades que nela tinha entrado o espirito maligno, e a começaram a exorcizar segundo os ritos da igreja".

<sup>76</sup> "se invocares devotamente o nome de Iezu com a boca; ou não podendo com a boca, com a coração; mizericordiamente em o Senhor vos concedemos plenaria indulgencia; e remissão de todos vossos peccados".

## Conclusion

Historic gender bias has obscured the important contributions that these women made to court life, international diplomacy, and to their monastic institutions and orders. When Cavalheiro transcribed those documents he did both a great archival service and a great historiographical disservice. Undoubtedly the printed typeface is much clearer to contemporary readers; however, his editorial decisions and historical assertions have left a stubborn stain on the historiography.

Soror Maria da Cruz and Dona Maria both exercised their agency through letter writing, gift giving and hospitality challenging the notion that elite Portuguese women were inactive or passive. Soror Maria's illegitimacy and her monastic estate did not prevent her from acting as an agent of the Crown and she mobilised her kinship and social networks for petitions and diplomacy as well as ecclesiastic and monastic politics. Dona Maria's letters – at least those that survive – were more focused on maintaining her incomes from the Crown and a peaceful relationship with the royal family; though her role in welcoming an English convert to Lisbon evidenced a fascinating departure from this norm. Certainly, Soror Maria da Cruz had a greater diplomatic impact than Dona Maria. Beyond interceding for “the heirs of the House of Medina Sidonia” it remains unclear the extent to which she interceded for particular policies. However, it is clear that Soror Maria da Cruz was well-known by the key diplomatic figures of the age who were all instrumental in formalising the peace between Portugal and Spain in 1668.

In both cases, illegitimacy did not preclude these women from exercising their agency. As previously noted, the Avis and Bragança dynasties were ultimately descended from illegitimate sons whilst numerous illegitimate children of the nobility held positions of great importance within the Church and/or one of the organs of state; Frei Domingos de Gusmão, Soror Maria da Cruz's aforementioned half-brother, being an excellent example of this. Crucially, in both cases, their networks crossed not simply over their convent walls but across seas and political boundaries.

## Manuscripts

Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (Lisbon). Ministério das Finanças, Convento de Santa Teresa de Carnide de Lisboa, Caixa 1983, *Inventário de extinção do convento de Santa Teresa de Carnide de Lisboa*.

Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (Lisbon). Ordem dos Carmelitas Des-

- calços, Convento de São João da Cruz de Carnide, Livro 1, *Livro da Fundação do Real Convento de Carnide*.
- Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo (Lisbon). Manuscritos da Livraria, No. 380, *Cortes que celebraram na cidade de Lisboa sobre a deposição do rei D. Afonso VI e regência do reino ao príncipe D. Pedro, seu irmão. Ano de 1668*, Biblioteca da Ajuda (Lisbon). *Manuscritos*, 51-X-17.
- Biblioteca Geral da Universidade de Coimbra (Coimbra). Ms 997, *Fundação dos Agostinhos Descalços de Portugal*.
- Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris). Manuscrits, Français 22787 (1601-1800). *Collection de l'abbé Dangeau sur l'état de la France au temps de Louis XIV CXCIV-CXCV Melanges sur l'histoire de Portugal*.
- Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris). Manuscrits, Portugais 27.
- Bibliothèque nationale de France (Paris). Manuscrits, Portugais 31; 32; 35.
- British Library (London). Western Manuscripts, Add MS 15170, *Copies of Letters and Official Papers relating to business transacted by the Duke of Cadaval, when Minister of State in Portugal, in the years 1691-1697*.
- British Library (London). Western Manuscripts Add MS 38850, Hodgkin Papers Vol. V, *Letter to Queen Catherine (1668)*, fl.19v-fl.20.
- Bodleian Library (Oxford). MS. Carte 75: fl.460, *Sister Maria de la Cruz to Sandwich: written from [Lisbon]*; fl.481, *Maria de la Cruz to Sandwich: written from Dal Convento [sic] [in Lisbon]*.
- Bodleian Library (Oxford). MS Carte 75, fl. 462r-v, *Lord Sandwich to Maria de la Cruz*.
- The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Archives (London). The papers of Sir Richard Fanshawe BART, NR90/248 'From the Lady Abbess at Alcantara near Lix.a Doña Maria Guzman dated 12 feb.ry 1664'.
- The National Archives (London). Records assembled by the State Paper Office, including papers of the Secretaries of State up to 1782, SP 89/5/81, 'Folio 117: *Sister Maria de la Cruz to Charles II. 1662 Oct 4 Convent of the Flemish Nuns Lisbon*'.
- The National Archives (London). Records assembled by the State Paper Office, including papers of the Secretaries of State up to 1782, SP 89/6/46, 'Folio 87: *Sister Maria de la Cruz [Lady Abbess of Alcantara] to Charles II. Effusive thanks and compliments. 1663 Apr 9 Lisbon*'.
- The National Archives (London). Records assembled by the State Paper Office, including papers of the Secretaries of State up to 1782, SP 89/8/4, 'Folio 6: *Dona Maria to Charles II. Thanking him for his favours and protesting her own devotion to him. 1667 Jan 22 Lisbon*'; SP 89/13/78, 'Folio 139: *Francis Parry to Secretary Coventry. 1675 Jan 18/28 Lisbon*'.

## Printed sources

- ABLANCOURT, Nicolas Fremont d' (1701). *Memoires de Monsieur d'Ablancourt, Envoyé de Sa Majesté Très-Chrétienne Louis XIV en Portugal*. Amsterdam: J. Louis de Lorme.
- ANON (1662). *Relacion de las Fiestas que se hizieron en Lisboa con la nueva del casamiento de la Serenissima Infanta de Portugal Doña Catalina (ya Reyna de la Gran Bretaña) con el Serenissimo Rey de la Gran Bretaña Carlos Segundo deste nombre*. Lisbon: Oficina de Henrique Valente de Oliveira.
- ANON (1700). *An Account of the Court of Portugal under the Reign of the present King Dom Pedro II*. London: Thomas Bennet.
- BELÉM, Jeronymo de (1755). *Chronica Serafica da Santa Provincia dos Algarves, da Regular Observancia de Nosso Serafico Padre S. Francisco*, vol. 3. Lisbon: Oficina de Ignacio Rodrigues.
- BELÉM, Jeronymo de (1758). *Chronica Serafica da Santa Provincia dos Algarves, da Regular Observancia de Nosso Serafico Padre S. Francisco*, vol. 4. Lisbon: Oficina de Ignacio Rodrigues.
- BLUTEAU, Rafael Bluteau (1713). *Vocabulário Portuguez e Latino*, vol. 3. Coimbra: Real Collegio das Artes da Companhia.
- Descriptive List of the State Papers Portugal 1661-1780 in the Public Record Office London* (1979). Charles R. Boxer (ed.). Lisbon: Academia das Ciências de Lisboa.
- CAVALHEIRO, António Rodrigues (1944). "Soror Maria da Cruz, Filha Natural de D. João IV. Documentos da Biblioteca de Paris", in *Anais da Academia Portuguesa da História*, 8, 11-76.
- COELHO, P.M. Laranjo (ed.) (1940). *Cartas de El-Rei D. João IV para diversas autoridades do Reino*. Lisbon: Academia Portuguesa da História.
- DEMERSON, Paulette (1994). "Correspondance diplomatique de François Lanier resident de France a Lisbonne (1ère partie, année 1642)", in *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Calouste Gulbenkian*, vol 33. Lisbon/Paris: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian.
- ERICEIRA, Luís de Meneses, conde de (1751). *História de Portugal Restaurado*, vol. I. Lisbon: Oficina de Domingos Rodrigues.
- ERICEIRA, Luís de Meneses, conde de (1759). *História de Portugal Restaurado*, vol. 4. Lisbon: Oficina de Ignacio Nogueira Xisto.
- FANSHAWE, Ann (1907). *The Memoirs of Ann Lady Fanshawe*. London: John Lane.
- FERNANDES, Manuel Fernandes (1699). *Alma Instruída*, vol. 3. Lisbon: Oficina de Miguel Deslandes.



- Gazeta de Lisboa Occidental*, No. 12, 25 março (1723). Lisbon: António Correia de Lemos.
- LACERDA, Bernarda Ferreira de (1634). *Soledades de Buçaco*. Lisbon: Mathias Rodrigues.
- LAHONTAN, Baron de (1704). *Suite du Voyage de l'Amerique, ou Dialogues de Monsieur le Baron de Lahontan et d'un Sauvage*. Amsterdam: Veuve de Boeteman.
- LISBOA, João Luís; MIRANDA, Tiago C.P. dos Reis; and OLIVAL, Fernanda (eds.) (2002). *Gazetas manuscritas da Biblioteca Pública de Évora, Vol. 1 (1729-1731)*. Lisbon: Biblioteca Nacional.
- LISBOA, João Luís; MIRANDA, Tiago C.P. dos Reis; and OLIVAL, Fernanda (eds.) (2005). *Gazetas manuscritas da Biblioteca Pública de Évora, Vol. 2 (1732-1734)*. Lisbon: Biblioteca Nacional.
- MATOZO, Luiz Montez (1934). *Ano Noticioso e Historico*, vol. 1. Lisbon: Biblioteca Nacional.
- MELO, Francisco Manuel de (1820). *Carta de Guia Casados*. London: Hansard.
- RAU, Virgínia (ed.) (1947). *Inventário dos bens da Rainha da Grã-Bretanha D. Catarina de Bragança*. Coimbra: Biblioteca da Universidade.
- RÊGO, Raul (ed.) (1995). *Tácito Português. Vida, Morte, Dittos e Feitos de El Rey Dom João IV de Portugal*. Lisbon: Livraria Sá da Costa Editora.
- Relaçam verdadeira da milagrosa victoria que alcançarão os Portugueses, que assistem na Fronteira de Olivença (1641)*. Lisbon: Jorge Rodrigues.
- RIBEIRO, Aquilino Ribeiro (1966). *O Galante Século XVIII: Textos do Cavaleiro de Oliveira*. Lisbon: Livraria Bertrand.
- RIVERO, Angel Sanchez and RIVERO, Angela Mariutti de Sanchez (eds.) (1933). *Viaje de Cosme de Médicis por España y Portugal (1668-1669)*. Madrid: Rivadeneyra.
- SILVA, Abílio Diniz (ed.) (2001). *Instruções políticas D. Luís da Cunha*. Lisbon: Comissão Nacional para as Comemorações dos Descobrimentos Portugueses.
- SILVA, António de Moraes (1789). *Diccionario da Lingua Portuguesa*, vol. 1. Lisbon: Officina de Simão Thaddeo Ferreira.
- SOUSA, António Caetano de (1740). *Historia Genealogica da Casa Real Portuguesa*, vol. 7. Lisbon: Regia Officina Sylviana.
- SOUSA, António Caetano de (1741). *Historia Genealogica da Casa Real Portuguesa*, vol. 8. Lisbon: Regia Officina Sylviana.
- SOUSA, António Caetano de (1743). *Historia Genealogica da Casa Real Portuguesa*, vol. 10. Lisbon: Regia Officina Sylviana.
- SOUSA, António Caetano de (1755). *Memorias Historicas, e Genealogicas dos*

*Grandes de Portugal*. Lisbon: Regia Officina Sylviana.

SOUSA, Manoel Caetano de (1688). *Sermam panegyrico, e gratulatorio*. Lisbon: Officina de Miguel Manescal.

VIEIRA, António Vieira (1644). *Sermam de S. Joam Baptista na Profissam da Senhora Madre Soror Maria da Cruz, Filha do Excellentissimo Duque de Medina Sydonia, Sobrinha da Raynha N. Senhora*. Lisbon: Domingos Lopes Rosa.

*Cartas do P. Antonio Vieyra da Companhia de JESU, Vol. 2* (1735). Lisbon: Officina da Congregação do Oratorio.

## Bibliography

- ALMELA, Luis Salas (2013). *The Conspiracy of the Ninth Duke of Medina Sidonia (1641)*. Leiden: Brill.
- ANASTÁCIO, Vanda (2010). "Women and literary sociability in eighteenth-century Lisbon", in Anke Gillcir, Alicia C. Montoya and Suzan van Dijk (eds.), *Women Writing Back/Writing Women Back: Transnational Perspectives from the Late Middle Ages to the Dawn of the Modern Era*. Leiden: Brill,
- BRAGA, Isabel Drummond; BRAGA Paulo Drummond (2011). *Duas rainhas em tempo de novos equilíbrios europeus: Maria Francisca Isabel de Sabóia, Maria Sofia Isabel de Neuburg*. Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores.
- BRANCO, João. "Cavalheiro, António Rodrigues", in *Dicionário de historiadores portugueses da Academia Real das Ciências ao Final do Estado Novo*. Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal and Centro de História da Universidade de Lisboa. <http://dichp.bnportugal.pt/> (consulted 03.12.2023).
- CARDIM, Pedro (2011). "A corte régia e o alargamento da esfera privada", in Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro (ed.), *História da Vida Privada em Portugal: A Idade Moderna*. Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 160-202.
- CUNHA, Mafalda Soares da; MONTEIRO, Nuno Gonçalo (2011). "As grandes casas", in Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro (ed.), *História da Vida Privada em Portugal: A Idade Moderna*. Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 202-243.
- DÓRIA, António Álvaro (1944). *A Rainha D. Maria Francisca de Sabóia (1646-1683)*. Porto: Livraria Civilização.
- FERREIRA, Darlene Abreu (2000). "Fishmongers and Shipowners: Women in Maritime Communities of Early Modern Portugal". *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, 31, 7-23.
- FIGUEIREDO, Pedro José de (1817). *Retratos, e Elogios dos Varões, e Donas, que illustraram a Nação Portuguesa*, vol.1. Lisbon: Officina de Simão Thadeo Ferreira.

- LOPES, Maria Antónia (1989). *Mulheres, espaço e sociabilidade. A transformação dos papéis femininos em Portugal à luz de fontes literárias (segunda metade do século XVIII)*. Lisbon: Livros Horizonte.
- LOURENÇO, Maria Paula Marçal; PINTO, Ricardo Fernando (2012). *D. Luísa de Gusmão (1613-1666)*. Lisbon: Gradiva.
- MONTEIRO, Nuno Gonçalo (2003). *Elites e Poder. Entre o Antigo Regime e o Liberalismo*. Lisbon: Imprensa das Ciências Sociais.
- PAIVA, José Pedro (2000). “A Igreja e o poder”, in Carlos Moreira Azevedo (ed.), *História Religiosa de Portugal, Volume 2: Humanismos e Reformas*. Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores, 135-185.
- PAIVA, José Pedro (2006). *Os Bispos de Portugal e do Império: 1495-1777*. Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra.
- PARDAL, Francisco José Pegacha (2022). “Cultura material à revelia da corte: o ouro e a prata de D. Maria (1643-1693), filha ilegítima de D. João IV”, in Isabel Drumon Braga and Paulo Drumond Braga (eds.), *Rainhas, Princesas e Infantas. Quotidiano, ritos e cerimónias na Península Ibérica (séculos XVI XX)*. Lisboa: Temas & Debates, 129-153.
- PEREIRA, Ana Cristina Duarte (2008). *Princesas e Infantas de Portugal (1640-1736)*. Lisbon: Edições Colibri.
- RAPOSO, Hipólito (1947). *Dona Luísa de Gusmão: Duquesa e Rainha, 1613-1666*. Lisbon: Empresa Nacional de Publicidade.
- SAID, Edward W. (1979). *Orientalism*. New York: Random House.
- TRONI, Joana Almeida (2008). *Catarina de Bragança (1638-1705)*. Lisbon: Edições Colibri.
- VALLANCE, Monique (2012). *A rainha restauradora: Luísa de Gusmão*. Lisbon: Círculo de Leitores.

