

Elite Female Authors in the Field of Power in Eighteenth-Century Portugal: Epistolary Writing as Part of a Political Strategy

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Abstract: This paper explores the role of Enlightenment women through an analysis of their social behaviour. The semi-public and semi-private features of an epistolary corpus reveal the boundaries marking the accepted pattern for women's intervention in the cultural field at that time, and behaviours that transgress these boundaries. This research focuses on eighteenth-century Portugal in the context of other cultural spaces, in order to establish parameters useful for the study of the role of women's in eighteenth-century cultural fields.

Keywords: ambition, transgression, letter-writing, Portuguese Enlightenment, *doxa*, Teresa de Mello Breyner, countess of Vimieiro, marchioness of Alorna

The traditional approach to female cultural production in the field of Portuguese studies has focused mainly on the idea of *transgression*, ignoring the production of those women who occupied political or social positions that prevented them from taking positions that might endanger their political privileges or those of their families. In the case of Portugal, writers such Teresa Margarida da Silva e Orta,¹ Micaela de Sousa Cesar e Lencastre (vis-countess of Balsemão),² Joana Rousseau de Villeneuve,³ Leonor da Fonseca Pimentel,⁴ Soror Theresa Angélica Peregrina de Jesus,⁵ the countess of Pombeiro, the countess of Soure,⁶ Joana Isabel de Lencastre Forjaz,⁷ Maria do Patrocínio, Maria Lobo, Maria do Monte,⁸ Francisca de Paula Possolo da Costa,⁹ Ana Bernardina Pinto Pereira de Sousa Noronha,¹⁰ Rita Clara Freire de Andrade,¹¹ Maria da Graça Fortunata,¹² Margarida Gertrudes de Jesus,¹³ Maria Antónia de S. Boaventura e Menezes¹⁴ and Maria Micaela dos Prazeres¹⁵ are scarcely mentioned in literature discussing eighteenth-century cultural production in Portugal, and are mainly traceable only through old encyclopaedic works¹⁶ or in very recent anthologies.¹⁷

Owing to her exceptional biography, the marchioness of Alorna is the only female writer consistently present in Portuguese literary histories throughout the twentieth century.¹⁸ However, a number of other Portuguese women chose to intervene in the field of culture, for reasons that will be explored here, through manuscripts and letters (conventionally called 'circumstance' poetry or religious works) or, outside the boundaries of those genres, by publishing books anonymously.

This article will study the ways in which one of these women was able to satisfy her own ambition, as a member of the political and cultural elite in the Portuguese Enlightenment, and the boundaries that, as a female *actor*, she was unwilling to cross for several reasons. The most important of these reasons were the restrictions surrounding a woman's expected behaviour and the potential risks for her home and family if she did not adhere to the stereotype of a virtuous, modest and low-profile woman. For that purpose I will first attempt a set of conclusions about the strategies of these Portuguese women through the study of an epistolary corpus. This will be followed by a discussion

of these conclusions in the light of recent literature on different cultural spaces that seeks to establish a common ground for the study of female strategies.

My hypothesis is that the under-representation of Portuguese women in historiography and literary history is related more to the pattern fostered throughout the nineteenth century of an independent career writer (a professional secular man from a bourgeois background) than to an actual scarcity of women participating in the fields of power and culture. I will point out how women in the elite realms of society possessed the means and education to intervene in those fields. The article will also discuss some of the ways they found to balance the awareness of this fact and their ambition for achieving recognition with the limitations imposed on them by the boundaries of socially acceptable feminine behaviour, and how they found strategies for acting amid such contradictions. I will posit the idea that the study of these women's strategies can potentially help us to understand the cultural field in more complex ways, because it sheds light on other ways of participating in the field than that of becoming a professional author. Lastly, I will propose that epistolary writing can be seen as a referential place for women from which they articulate both their desire to participate politically and culturally in the public sphere and the need to keep a low profile about their interventions in those fields. This article will examine the activities of one member of the Portuguese social and cultural elite from the second half of the eighteenth century, Teresa de Mello Breyner, countess of Vimieiro, looking at the different strategies she used to participate both in the field of culture and in the field of power. By pushing the boundaries of decorum for a female, and trespassing across the alleged border between the private and public spheres, she demonstrated an extreme awareness of her own abilities while simultaneously keeping close to the model of a modest woman.

The concept of field used throughout this paper is taken from Pierre Bourdieu, who describes it as the space of struggle in which interactions, transactions and events occur.¹⁹ According to his field theory, 'the literary and artistic field is contained within the field of power, while possessing a relative autonomy with respect to it, especially as regards its economic and political principles of hierarchization'.²⁰ This article will therefore consider the relationship between the two fields (that of power and that of cultural production) and the blurred boundary separating them. The goal is to understand better the strategies developed by a woman belonging to the social elite who participated in the two fields, as a literary producer and as a member of the royal court. This dynamic has been commented on by Bourdieu as well:

The most disputed frontier of all is the one which separates the field of cultural production and the field of power. It may be more or less clearly marked in different periods, positions occupied in each field may be more or less totally incompatible, moves from one universe to the other more or less frequent and the overall distance between the corresponding populations more or less great.²¹

This paper is based on the manuscript letters written by Mello Breyner²² to her friend the marchioness of Alorna (herself a writer) over two decades.²³ Through a qualitative analysis of these letters I will try to assess an example of a noblewoman's normal pattern of behaviour in late eighteenth-century Portugal: the quotidian nature of the documents will give us information about the behaviours considered acceptable, and those that might be considered as transgressing social, cultural or political rules.

First, the relative rarity of this set of manuscript documents must be stressed: they pertain to an under-studied period of Portuguese culture, and the few sets of correspondence

that are known or which have been published in Portugal for any period have been written by men.²⁴ It should be added that this correspondence is unusual as well because of its extent: it contains more than 300 letters sent over a period of two decades. As a result, it can be approached from various points of view, and has been used for the last decade as a major source of information for the study of the women authors it encompasses.²⁵ Third, the correspondence contains writings on domestic and economic issues, politics, literature, music and even original poetic works by Mello Breyner. These are fragments which reveal information about writing processes, publication strategies and the uses of manuscripts during the period.

The main addressee is the future marchioness of Alorna, Leonor de Almeida, although letters sent to three different women of the same family can be found – those sent to Leonor, to her mother and to her sister Maria – and there is evidence to suggest that the letters were read aloud to several people. By the time the correspondence began, the three women of the Alorna family had already been imprisoned, for political reasons,²⁶ in the convent of Chelas, on the outskirts of Lisbon. Their imprisonment lasted from 1758 to 1777 (they were released when Queen Mary I took the throne after the death of her father, King Joseph I), and the correspondence started at some point between 1769 and 1770. The main reasons for this correspondence, as can be inferred from the letters, were the need for an ally outside the walls of the convent who could attend to domestic issues (the keeping of the estate's books, the supply of food and other commodities etc.) and the need to provide the girls with some refined female society as a sort of training prior to their eventual release.

After their liberation, the correspondence between Mello Breyner and Leonor de Almeida continued, as the latter moved first to Porto and then to Vienna, where her new husband, the count of Oeynhausen, was the Portuguese ambassador. We can read this set of letters as simply narrating the friendship between two/four women over the years, or – and this is our interest – as a means of identifying patterns relating both to the behaviour of a group of women from the social elite and to the possibilities open to those women for intervention in the cultural and political field in Portugal in the last decades of the eighteenth century.

This correspondence is the only known testimony of this period in Portugal to have been carried on exclusively by women. It can be assumed that this rareness is due to problems relating to preservation and a lack of interest in making the correspondence public rather than just because noblewomen did not write. As a matter of fact, this very set of manuscripts, despite being well preserved in the main public historic archive of Portugal, the Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais-Torre do Tombo, remained unnoticed until 2002.²⁷ Since then, it has been quoted and used as a corpus for the articles and books referred to above.²⁸

Besides this set of correspondence, another set of letters written by Mello Breyner and sent to the bishop of Evora, Manuel do Cenáculo, is preserved in the library of that town. And more sets may possibly exist or may have existed, because in her letters Mello Breyner refers to writing as one of her main daily tasks. The existing literature on Mello Breyner mentions her correspondence with an important figure in the Portuguese Enlightenment, the librarian Ribeiro dos Santos,²⁹ and her relations with others such as José Correia da Serra,³⁰ António Dinis da Cruz e Silva, Domingos Maximiano Castro, Nicolau Tolentino³¹ and Luis Antoine de Valleré.³² In a similar vein, throughout the corpus the importance that letter-writing had in the countess's life is evident, for both business concerns and social reasons.³³ However, more research remains to be done in private and public archives in order to uncover other sets of manuscripts such as these.

From this starting-point I will analyse the relations between the social elite and the literary field in Portugal, as well as the closely related distinction between ambition and the risks of trespassing the boundaries of decorum for a noblewoman.

As members of the aristocracy, both Mello Breyner and Almeida formed part of the dominant elite in the fields of culture and power. However, as women, they were at the same time part of the dominated field. The countess shows both herself and her friend to be women of extraordinary erudition,³⁴ but it is not clear whether this is a quality attributed to just the two of them or also applies to other women of their circle of acquaintances. As a matter of fact, through the correspondence we will find several references to women acting as political or cultural promoters, and with a strong sense of their belonging to the aristocratic elite. Such references are perhaps not extremely frequent, but they are mentioned in the texts as natural, and not in the least as denoting unexpected behaviours.³⁵ It was the nonchalance underlying such references (particularly in the quotations in note 24 above, where Mello Breyner is not elaborating a thesis on the subject but just referring to it *en passant*), that made me hypothesise that this kind of work might have been acceptable for their contemporaries and fellow men and women of the court.

For a noblewoman to be well educated is, as the correspondence shows, not only desirable but even a deliberate strategy for certain houses. Significantly enough, both Mello Breyner and her sister, as well as their mother and grandmother before them, were court ladies or ‘damas do paço’, which in Portugal meant a great deal for noble houses because of their political power.³⁶ The main proof of this is that both sisters married above their station – Teresa, with the count of Vimieiro, and her sister Inês with the count of Galveias – despite the fact that their father was only a ‘senhor’ (a title two steps *below* the title of count or countess), and their mother was granted the title of countess – as a reward for her services to the court – only in April 1789.

The problem for them was how to reconcile their awareness of possessing social and intellectual advantages with maintaining the requisite feminine modesty. As a member of the nobility and as a woman well aware of her remarkable education, Mello Breyner demanded recognition and the ability to intervene actively in the field, and as a member of the aristocracy she had obligations regarding the dignity of her house and the good name of her family. Those were two strong pillars for power in an *ancien régime* court, and therefore she would never risk losing them as a result of her involvement in any of her other activities:

I always lived in the court, learning from others about the things I should be careful with, and this was of such service to me because in condemning my lyrics to silence, I managed not to lose the good opinion of serious people, whom I sometimes heard say: *for me, a woman doing poetry has lost everything*. See! What consolation for the unhappy muse that used to inspire me! Believe me, dear Lília,³⁷ it is not convenient for the world to be aware of what nature has confided to us.³⁸

Far from this being an anachronistic, post-gender studies interpretation, the countess is well aware of this contradiction, and she explicitly refers to it.³⁹ The way Mello Breyner bypasses this apparent paradox is to adopt a discreet, modest position in public – by keeping private, but not necessarily concealed, her opinions and actions. And she benefits from her habit of making the letters publicly/privately ambiguous. Two clear examples show the use Mello Breyner makes of her letters. As have been said above, she published her two known books anonymously: *Osmia*,⁴⁰ a play about an ancient Lusitanian queen who triumphs over the Roman invaders; and the translation of a eulogy originally written

in French by Mary Caroline Murray addressed to the empress Teresa of Austria after her death.⁴¹ However, she discusses her authorship of both works in letters addressed to Leonor de Almeida, even criticising (in the first case) the different theories discussed about who had written the play, attributing the discussion to the fact that people did not want to recognise that it was written by a woman.⁴² On the other hand, she frequently defends her role in the establishment, funding the establishment, founding and organising of the Royal Academy of Lisbon, even though she was not allowed to be an official member of it.⁴³ She proudly underlines her role in the field of culture, but because letters are supposed to be a private means of communication, no one could accuse her of being immodest for revealing her name as the author of her anonymously published works, or for talking openly about her involvement in the establishment of the Academy.⁴⁴

But, if gender is important for explaining this paradox, there is another factor that cannot be dismissed if we are to understand both the countess's apparently ambiguous behaviour and the critical and historiographical misfortune suffered by her work and that of most of her contemporaries. Since the 1850s, when the modern definition of literature took root in Portugal, the role model for an author has mostly been a professional who actively publishes his or her works, and we can easily trace this model throughout the pages of the major Portuguese literary histories. From the beginning of the twentieth century there is a visible trend, ranging from the very detailed and exhaustive compilations of authors (both male and female, religious and secular), such as the twenty-three volumes (1858–9) produced by Inocêncio Francisco da Silva, to new essays focusing on individual authors. In the Portuguese case, the turning point is the work of Teresa Leitão de Barros,⁴⁵ who explicitly embraced 'modern criticism' in opposition to the dated criticism made by priests who devoted excessive attention to ladies with more 'moral virtues' than 'literary' ones.⁴⁶ Specifically thinking of female writers, de Barros established the idea that women authors should be studied separately from men because of the inferior quality of their works, attributed by her to their subordinate position in society. When writing about eighteenth-century female authors, she describes all of them as 'satellites' of the marchioness of Alorna, devoid of interest other than as testimony to the occupations of noblewomen. This trend was consistently followed in Portuguese literary history throughout the twentieth century.

What we find in this particular correspondence is the portrait of a very different literary field occupied by non-professional noblemen and -women – writers who have no interest in a publishing career. Printing their writings is one of the ways they find for making their ideas public, but not the only way, or even the most important one. Among other activities, Mello Breyner published anonymously, wrote manuscripts which she later copied and distributed, participated at the Academy, met with other colleagues in salons and at parties and, lastly, supported the careers of less wealthy writers⁴⁷ – all of which adds up to an active and decisive intervention in the field of culture. Nevertheless, each of these tasks kept her well within the boundaries of modesty, because they are all kept within the bounds of the domestic.

Unfortunately, a statistical analysis charting the social origin of literary or cultural production in eighteenth-century Portugal has yet to be carried out, and therefore we cannot know for certain what the real relevance of every social group was within the whole universe of literary/cultural producers. Nonetheless, it could be suggested that the aristocracy represents an important part of the literary field not only, or even mainly, as producers but, like the countess, in the form of mediators and promoters as well. This aristocratic and highly heteronomous model of participation in the literary field, which takes the perspective of literary productions as forming part of a broader political work, clashes

with the romantic idea of authorial freedom encouraged by the process of progressive autonomisation of the cultural field throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Parallel to the changes in the field of cultural production, the field of power was changing as well. Women's forum for influence in politics, originally through social gatherings, was replaced by parliament, the only way to gain access to which was by running for election, which women were not allowed to do until the 1930s. In the meantime, universities – which banned the admittance of women as well⁴⁸ – emerged as the only institution with the ability to legitimise knowledge. Thus women's education, similar in most cases to the one analysed here (one obtained through the mother's lineage), was not useful for the new scenario. The aristocratic home education model was replaced by religious schools for young ladies, which entailed a very different approach to the role of women in society. In this context, women's exclusion was double. On the one hand, their participation in politics was no longer visible or legitimised; on the other, the professionalism required in order to participate in the literary field was absent. Alongside the already existing requirements of modesty and discretion, we now begin to find women with less education.

As was mentioned earlier, there is still insufficient research on this topic in the case of Portugal, and, at the same time, not enough documentation concerning female authors has been discovered and examined to establish a conclusive comparative pattern among those involved. For this reason, I will discuss and develop my hypothesis by contrasting them with research drawn from different geo-cultural areas.

It is worth asking whether the epistolary genre is the way these elite women found to combine *ambition* and *transgression*. Given the small and restricted space they were able to occupy in the public, cultural and political debate, they used correspondence as a secure way to intervene and promote ideas, preserving themselves from the perils that any kind of known transgression would carry. This explains the central role that correspondence plays in the life of the women discussed in this article – its intensity and duration through time – and will explain, at the same time, the care taken to prevent lost letters or confidential ones from falling into the wrong hands.

Nevertheless, it cannot be assumed that Mello Breyner's discourse is typical of Portuguese noblewomen of her time, because we lack the evidence of other testimonies that would help us to establish to what extent it is representative of the general rule. Conclusions similar to ours, however, have been drawn by researchers with regard to different spaces. On the one hand, this points to the fact that, despite the small corpus we have – because we lack other case studies for comparison – the conclusions seem to be heading in the right direction. On the other hand, by comparing the similarities of the strategies, topics and functions taken on by correspondence and its authors in France, Spain and British America with the ones identified for their contemporaries in Portugal, we can see to what extent (and despite very different socio-political circumstances) the *doxa*⁴⁹ regulating the behaviour of elite women and their position in society is derived from a wider cultural pattern. In fact, Elizabeth Dillon, writing about gender, liberalism and the public literary sphere, understands the private position of women as being 'integral to liberalism since its inception'.⁵⁰

The first point I will address here is the definition of correspondence as a space for sociability. Writing letters, even being a part of the tasks of day-to-day life for noblemen and -women, can be related to using manuscripts, even clandestine literature, for a definition of the various functions assumed by this kind of writing. Since the emergence of a market for printed literature, manuscripts have become increasingly confined to specific uses – as private communication or for spreading clandestine or forbidden ideas among

small groups of allies or fellow party members. However, as Wendy Weston McLallen has noted, they are central to an understanding of eighteenth-century culture, regardless of whether or not their authors published their works, and were especially important for women as a means of establishing networks and participating in the public sphere.⁵¹

When they began their correspondence, the authors who produced this set of letters were living separately, but were both nevertheless living in or near Lisbon, with access to both regular mail and messenger services. After 1777 Alorna moved to Vienna, but the correspondence continued during these years. During this period (1770–89) we have a rate of almost seventeen letters a year. Considering the difficulties, frequently referred to in the letters, of having regular international mail at this time, the importance these women attach to their communication is noteworthy.

Even if the conventionally assumed character of correspondence is private, it is important to emphasise the fact that the post would not have been a safe channel at all at the time and place in question. Under the Portuguese absolute monarchy, letters were regularly opened by public servants, and the correspondence shows that Mello Breyner knew, or strongly believed, this to be the case. This why the letters incorporate a semi-public dimension, which the correspondents explicitly recognise, and they act accordingly.

The same pattern can be identified for the British America studied by McLallen:

The manuscripts women circulated among themselves performed the cultural work of allowing them to participate in British-American politics and culture [... E]ven though these women writers, ostensibly, did not intend their texts for public consumption, to what extent did those texts provide public stages on which the women could rehearse, control, inscribe, or elide the fluid, yet often conflicting subject positions of the era?⁵²

Every letter is a subjective testimony seeking to design a public image for the people involved and, at the same time, pursues the promotion of a specific repertoire.⁵³ This is explicit in places where the countess addresses the agents who she assumes are opening the letters.⁵⁴ At the same time she uses alternative, private channels when she wants to send certain letters, and explicitly informs her addressee about the methods and the reasons.⁵⁵

In the letters sent by ordinary mail we find opinions about music,⁵⁶ friendship, public policies, publicity with regards to several ventures promoted by the countess or her husband, information about and promotion of the actions of the Royal Academy of Lisbon etc. If she is aware that her letters are being opened, and she chooses alternative channels when she thinks it is worthwhile, it is reasonable to infer that, when using ordinary mail, she modulates her speech according to the possible risks and even the opportunities offered by the semi-public character of the post.⁵⁷

In a period when publishing was difficult and risky for everyone, but especially for women, as noted by the countess herself,⁵⁸ and in Portugal there was no press as we know it today (the only newspaper for this period being the *Gazeta de Lisboa*, an official paper containing local and international news together with practical information such as the arrivals and departures of ships), correspondence could be a powerful means for promoting ideas and people, giving the correspondents, as we will see, a safer place from which to intervene.

The two books published by the countess during her life – so far as has been established up until now – were both issued anonymously. Furthermore, both carried some of the same ideas as the letters: (1) the defence of the sovereign queen D. Maria (highly controversial since the beginning of her administration); (2) the defence of the leading role of the aristocracy; and (3) an emphasis on, and a defence of, a political role for women. It is

known from the letters and from an analysis of the contents of the two works mentioned earlier that the countess was very careful about her publishing strategy. As well as being aware that her correspondence was regularly opened, it can be safely assumed that she was quite careful with every opinion or piece of information she included in the letters.

The ambiguity between the public and the private dimensions of the correspondence creates a space for private relations (two friends living apart and communicating) and for public intervention as well. Apart from the large amount of information contained in the correspondence, it is the former that is the most important aspect in an analysis of the letters. For the countess, as a woman and as member of the aristocracy, speaking openly with a friend is acceptable to society. Because letters are not supposed to be opened (even if they actually are), the position she takes is kept, technically speaking, in the private sphere. Even if the contents of the documents express political opinions or criticise other members of the court,⁵⁹ she is not crossing the most important boundary for women: public display. As the analysis of the countess's career has shown, participation in the fields of culture or politics is allowed – as in the case of the marchioness of Alorna – but ostentation is not.⁶⁰ Women should assume the theological virtues embodied by the Virgin Mary, performing silence, chastity and modesty, even if they are actively participating in political and cultural discussions.

This brings the links between the private and public sphere – and the position of women in both – into discussion, and can be related to Enlightenment culture in a broader sense. On this point I agree with Elizabeth Dillon, who places the very construction of the Habermasian public sphere not as something separate from the private sphere but as part of 'two spheres mutually articulating one another'.⁶¹ Related to this, and of extreme importance for our study, is the place reserved for women in this distribution. As Dillon puts it: 'the privacy of women is the product not of women's seclusion in their homes, but of a public articulation and valuation of women's domestic position.'⁶²

Given that fact, this article assumes that correspondence plays a mediating role between the two spheres, and that through it Mello Breyner, and perhaps other elite women, found a comfortable position for dealing with her own ambition to participate in public debate – both cultural and political – and with the restrictions imposed first by an *ancien régime doxa*, and then by a capitalist *doxa*. Each of these, via different arguments, reduces women to a secondary role in a society highly determined by religion and biology, respectively.⁶³

In other words, through correspondence and manuscripts, women had the opportunity to engage in the public sphere; they could defy, without transgressing, the social construction of their given positions in society. In this sense, the interpretation of differences in domesticity in the eighteenth and nineteenth century and praised by McLallen⁶⁴ is perfectly applicable to eighteenth-century Portugal and sheds light on the aforementioned articulation between private and public spheres: eighteenth-century women praise their homes and the retreat and domesticity of their simple lives because their homes – sometimes their bedrooms, or their private libraries – are the places from where they act as cultural and political agents, preserving their privacy.

Such exaltations of domesticity are often found in the countess's letters, discussing the history of women's knowledge in Portugal, linking her own studies to a female tradition rooted in the sixteenth-century court and regretting what she sees as men's entitlement to supervise women's studies. She defines her (and other women's) 'study' as the private place for women's literary performances, stressing the perils of letting their literary works make connections outside those walls: 'If another woman, more honest, is persuaded by gallantry and allows what she writes in her study room to be seen by other eyes, Oh my God, what a disgrace!'⁶⁵

In the same tone she defines herself as isolated from the court and secluded with her books and a small circle of friends and family: 'my home, where I often live alone with my books, a few of my siblings and the duke [of Lafões], who spends some time here, which is really worth more than all the others who could come to torment us and oppress us with all their cyclones of nothings'.⁶⁶ And she tries to show how these modest but intellectual surroundings are enough for her: 'If my health keeps me strong, my pencil and my books are my company.'⁶⁷ Two years later, after moving into a new house, she describes her room as the site of all her wealth showing the importance she gives to this part of the house:

I have a beautiful, moderately noble home, as it corresponds to my present situation, and among other things I have an office deserving of your presence. Here I have my books, my drawings and your letters with just a few others. They are all my riches, and when I see them I fancy myself opulent.⁶⁸

But, far from being exclusively a place for domestic retirement, this office at home is referred to in several places as the place where decisions are made, as, in a letter already quoted,⁶⁹ when Mello Breyner's connection to the Royal Academy is discussed, or when she refers to a plan for a civic building promoted by the Royal Academy, and finally adopted by the queen's government as a subject discussed in a 'corner' of her office:

I would like [...] to start [...] to preach [i.e., extol] the beautiful project of the canal from the [river] Tagus to the Guadiana. It is a project exactly calculated by the diligence of the Academy, and carried out with an exactitude equalling the talents of Mr de Vallaré. [...] Yesterday, in a corner of my office, I was saying that if a company was to be created, I would join in it with the trust-fund of my jewels.⁷⁰

If we bear in mind that associations such as clubs, guilds, lodges etc. are not conceivable forums for women, then it follows that they have a narrow range of options for participating as a group. Women can only establish some kind of society in convents as nuns or with their family inside their houses. In this context, the epistolary space appears as a means for defining collective platforms for women to participate in.

This is the place occupied by correspondence. It is a private and daily activity, performed in the privacy of women's homes. However, because of the circumstances described above, this private activity is the one that allows for safe participation in the public arena.

In order to understand Vimeiro's strategies, the idea introduced by Sonja Boon about the 'performance' of 'the woman of sensibility' as a strategy for transgressing the boundaries between spheres also needs to be understood.⁷¹ In her analysis of the strategies and position-taking of Suzanne Curchod Necker in the field of power in France, Boon underlines the contradictions between Necker's powerful and influential profile and her writings about the female character, which she describes as possessing 'foiblesse', 'sensibilité' and 'timidité'.⁷² Necker's main development consisted in the founding and management of a hospital in Paris, and as Boon has shown, her strategy was defined by performing a role consistent with the role typically construed as feminine, stressing the aspects of her actions related to charity and pity, in order to avoid the possible criticism that a more political or economic attitude might bring.

This is typical of the countess's strategy: the combination – and apparent contradiction – of an awareness of her high-profile background and abilities and her constant performance of modesty, while at the same time praising her home, her love for domesticity and her exaltation of sensibility. It would be impossible to quote all the references to friendship found throughout the correspondence. The word 'friendship' ('amizade') is used 242 times, 'friend' ('amiga') 286 times, but we can describe Mello Breyner's vision of friendship and feelings as characteristics that differentiate her group from the false feelings of the court: 'it is because of friendship that we enjoy those pleasures ignored by the Heroes of our century.'⁷³

For Mello Breyner feelings and domesticity both work as ways of protecting women who act in the fields of culture and power from the criticism that a more open path of intervention might grant them: political decisions are made as part of familiar sociability, and connections are regulated by feelings; political enemies are defined as those who are not capable of sharing the same understanding of friendship. Women who intervene in public assume the values that are socially attributed to women in order not to be accused of assuming manly roles or attitudes that could bring dishonour upon them and upon their houses.

What this article has tried to show, through the analysis of the work of the countess and the discussion of our main findings in the particular trajectory of this noblewoman with research developed for other contexts, is that, the more we know about individual trajectories of agents acting in the fields of culture and power – as in this particular case – the more we can learn about the general functioning of those fields. The fact that some of these agents, such as the countess herself, have been neglected by the literature regarding the period says more about the ways this literature has been put together than about the real relevance of figures such as Mello Breyner. As we have seen, private correspondence is highly relevant as a social space for promoting ideas. This is due to the ambiguity between public and private communication, and the particular problems encountered by some agents – mainly as women – in finding ways to communicate their ideas to the public.

I have tried also to show that, even if we lack a wider corpus of sources for establishing the standard parameters of behaviour for a noblewoman in eighteenth-century Portugal, a single set of correspondence can be used to form a hypothesis about the actual power available to women of that time.

The kind of literary production represented by the correspondence analysed here embodies the model privileged by female authors: it maintains the private/public binarism; it allows them safely to promote streams of thought and action by avoiding the standard, and hence censored, channels of printing; it maintains the decorum that forbids women from performing lucrative activities; and finally, it serves the goal (for a woman) of keeping a low profile and thus avoiding possible accusations of 'ostentation'. The main relevance of this set of letters, from the point of view of this article, is that it shows what can be assumed to be a pattern for a noblewoman such as the countess of Vimieiro. In it we find not transgression but rather political and cultural involvement, criticism, discussion of the life and customs of the nobility, and proposals for intervention.

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NOTES

1. Her main work, allegedly the first Portuguese or Brazilian novel – depending on the perspective – has been edited by M. Santa-Cruz, *Aventuras de Diófanos* (Lisbon: Caminho, 2002), and her career has been studied by Conceição Flores, in *As aventuras de Teresa Margarida da Silva e Orta em terras de Portugal e Brasil* (Natal: Opção, 2006), and by Eva Loureiro Vilarelhe in her master's thesis, 'Máximas de virtude e formosura de Teresa Margarida da Silva e Orta: revisom crítica e linhas de pesquisa', University of Santiago de Compostela, 2003.

2. Maria Luísa Malato Borralho, 'Por acaso hum viajante ...': a vida e a obra de Catarina de Lencastre, 1.^a viscondessa de Balsemão (1749–1824) (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 2008).

3. She was the author of an educational essay, *A aia vigilante: reflexões sobre a educação dos meninos desde a infância até a adolescência* (Lisbon: Oficina de Antonio Vicente da Silva, 1767).

4. A. Macciocchi, *Cara Eleonora: passione e morte della Fonseca Pimentel nella rivoluzione napoletana*, (Milan: Rizzoli, 1993), and Teresa Santos and Sara Marques Pereira, *Leonor da Fonseca Pimentel: a portuguesa de Nápoles (1752–1799)* (Lisbon: Universidade Nova de Lisboa).

5. In 1785 she published the Portuguese translation of a religious work originally written in Spanish entitled *A formosura de Deus, inferida e declarada pelas suas feições, assim como a fragil capacidade humana é possível*.

6. Both the countess of Pombeiro and the countess of Soure are referred to as poets by the marquess of Rezende: *Pintura de um outeiro nocturno e um sarao musical ás portas de Lisboa no fim do seculo passado feita e lida no primeiro serão literario do gremio recreativo em 12 de Dezembro de 1867* (Lisbon, 1868).

7. Francisco Topa, *A musa trovadora: dispersos e inéditos de D. Joana Isabel De Lencastre Forjaz* (Porto, 2000).

8. These three nuns are mentioned by the marquess of Rezende, 1868.

9. Andrea Gisela Vilela Borges, "'Meu triste canto deve ser ouvido": introdução à vida e obra de Francisca Possolo (1783–1838)', master's thesis, University of Porto, 2006.

10. She is the author of the poem *Canção fúnebre às sentidíssimas mortes do sereníssimo Sr. D. Gabriel Antonio, infante de Espanha, e da sereníssima Sra. D. Mariana Vitória, sua esposa e infanta de Portugal* (Lisbon, 1788).

11. She was responsible for the Portuguese translation of Horace's *Ars Poetica*: 'Arte poetica' de Q. Horacio Flaco traduzida em verso rimado [...] por D. Ritta Clara Freyre de Andrade (Coimbra: na Regia Oficina da Universidade, 1781).

12. Her poetry has been reissued by Vanda Anastácio, *Uma antologia improvável* (Lisbon: Relógio d'Água, 2013).

13. Elias J. Torres Feijó, 'Cartas públicas, cartas polemistas: as cartas apologéticas de Gertrudes Margarida de Jesus', in Vanda Anastasio (ed.), *Correspondências (usos da carta no século XVIII)* (Lisbon: Colibri – Fundação das Casas de Fronteira e Alorna, 2005), p.223-4.

14. She translated into Portuguese Jean Crasset's *Histoire de l'église du Japon*, as *Historia da igreja do Japão, em que se dá noticia da primeira entrada da fé n'aquelle imperio; dos costumes d'aquella nação, suas terras, e cousas muito curiosas e raras, para os eruditos estimaveis, e para todos gratas*, 3 vols (Lisbon: Offic. de Manuel da Silva, 1749–55).

15. Maria Micaela dos Prazeres, *Parabéns ao Sereníssimo Senhor Dom José, Príncipe da Beira, nosso senhor, na occasião do seu feliz nascimento* (Lisbon: Offic. de Ignacio Nogueira Xisto, 1761).

16. Mainly in Inocêncio Francisco da Silva, *Diccionario bibliografico portuguez: estudos applicaveis a Portugal e ao Brasil* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional, 1858–9).

17. Vanda Anastácio, *Uma antologia improvável* (Lisbon: Relógio d'Água, 2013).

18. Raquel Bello Vázquez, *Mulher, nobre, ilustrada, dramaturga: Teresa de Mello Breyner no sistema literário em Portugal (1788–1795)* (Bertamirans: Laivento, 2005), p.63-80.

19. 'A structured social space, a field of forces, a force field. It contains people who dominate and people who are dominated. Constant, permanent relationships of inequality operate inside this space, which at the same time becomes a space in which various actors struggle for the transformation or preservation of the field. All the individuals in this universe bring to the competition all the (relative) power at their disposal. It is this power that defines their position in the field and, as a result, their strategies.' P. Bourdieu, *On Television and Journalism* (London: Pluto, 1998), p.40-41 (originally published as *Sur la télévision, suivi de L'Emprise du journalisme* (Paris: Raisons d'Agir, 1996).

20. P. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p.37-8.

21. Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production*, p.43.

22. The career of the countess has been studied in several works by Raquel Bello Vázquez: 'Dá uma risada quando ouvires [...] Transgressão e ocultamento em Teresa de Mello Breyner', in Ana Maria da Costa Toscano and Shelley Godsland (eds), *Mulheres más: percepção e representações da mulher transgressora no mundo luso-hispânico* (Porto: Universidade Fernando Pessoa, 2004), vol. I.159-75; 'Lisbon and Vienna: The Correspondence of the Countess of Vimieiro and her Circle', *Portuguese Studies* 20:89 (2004); *Mulher, nobre, ilustrada, dramaturga: Teresa de Mello Breyner no sistema literário em Portugal (1788-1795)* (Bertamiráns, Laiovento. 2005); 'As versões ilustradas de Osmia: dois modelos de mulher, duas propostas sociais de classe', *Quadrant* 22 (2005), p.87-100; 'Privacidade e publicidade: a correspondência pessoal como forma de intervenção nos campos intelectual e do poder', in Anastácio, *Correspondências*, p.75-87; *Mulheres do século XVIII: a condessa do Vimieiro* (Lisbon: Ela por Ela, 2006); 'Quem é a condessa de Vimieiro?' in V. Anastácio (ed.), *Cartas de Lília e Tirse* (Lisbon: Colibri 2007) (with preliminary essays by Vanda Anastácio, Teresa Almeida and Raquel Bello Vázquez); 'A correspondência na segunda metade do século XVIII como espaço de sociabilidade', *Romance Notes* 42:1 (2007), p.79-89. All available at <http://galabra.ceb.ufg.br/p/10540-raquel-bello-vazquez>.

23. I quote the original manuscripts, indicating the name of the archival collection, the archive where they can be found and the folder. A small selection has been published in Anastácio, *Cartas de Lília e Tirse*. A complete transcription of the manuscripts can be found in my PhD dissertation, *Uma certa ambição de glória: trajetória, redes e estratégias de Teresa de Mello Breyner nos campos intelectual e do poder em Portugal (1770-1798)* (Santiago de Compostela: University of Santiago de Compostela Press, 2005); <http://200.137.196.58/galabra/images/stories/pdf/raquel/tese.pdf>.

24. A review of recent editions or research on epistolary corpora for the Portuguese case can be found in Bello Vázquez, 'Mulheres como agentes do campo das letras no Brasil e em Portugal no longo século XVIII: estado da questão e hipóteses', *Agália: Revista de Estudos na Cultura* 108 (2013 [forthcoming]).

25. See the published research by Anastácio and Almeida on the marchioness of Alorna: for Anastácio see 'D. Leonor de Almeida Portugal: as cartas de Chelas', in Anastácio, *Correspondências*, p.45-53, *Cartas de Lília e Tirse*, and *Marquesa de Alorna (1750-1839): estudos* (Lisbon: Prefácio Editores, 2009); for Almeida see 'Tratados epistolares do século XVIII: teoria e prática na correspondência de Cheias', in Anastácio, *Correspondências*, p.25-32, and 'Lília e Tirse', in *Cartas de Lília e Tirse*, p.xxv-xl.

26. The Alornas had been accused of being involved in an assassination attempt on King Joseph I in 1758. Some members of the family, including Leonor de Almeida's grandmother, were publicly executed; others, including her father, were imprisoned in the jail of A Junqueira.

27. Bello Vázquez, 'Feminismo e aristocracia no projecto ilustrado de um teatro nacional.' 7th International Conference of the Associação Internacional de Lusitanistas, Brown University, Providence, RI, 2002 (available at https://www.academia.edu/4163296/Feminismo_e_aristocracia_no_projeto_ilustrado_de_um_teatro_nacional_-_Teresa_de_Mello_Breyner) [accessed 15 February 2015].

28. See note 22 above.

29. Teófilo Braga, 'D. Theresa de Mello Breyner (seculo XVIII-XIX)', *Arquivo de Ex-Líbris Portugueses* (Genoa: Tip. dei Surdo-Muti, 1904), p.95. According to António da Costa, *A mulher em Portugal* (Lisbon: Typografia da Companhia Nacional, 1892), dos Santos was also responsible for saving a part of Breyner's manuscripts in the National Library in Lisbon (p.256).

30. Augusto da Silva Carvalho, '*O abade Correia da Serra*': *memórias – classe de ciências* (Lisbon: Academia das Ciências de Lisboa, 1948), p.10.

31. Inocência Francisco da Silva, *Diccionario bibliografico português*, vol. VII.318.

32. Túlio Espanca, *Inventário artístico de Portugal: concelhos de Alandroal, Borba, Mourão, Portel, Redondo, Reguengos de Mosaraz, Viana do Alentejo e Vila Viçosa* (Lisbon: Academia Nacional de Belas-Artes, 1975), vol. IX, pt I, p.52a.

33. It would be impossible to mention here all the references made in the correspondence to the exchange of letters with other people. To support my statement, I will refer just some of them. Besides references to members of her family or unidentified addressees, the countess refers to 'business letters that I have to answer by my own hand ('muitas cartas de negócio a que devia responder de mão própria', Estremoz, 20 October 1770, letter filed in the Núcleo da Casa Fronteira-Alorna Instituto dos Arquivos Nacionais-Torre do Tombo [henceforth NCEFA-IANTT], in Lisbon, folder no. 222) and to letters to different people, such as the employee musician Miguel José ('Onde, minha Lília, te escondes', NCEFA-IANTT, 223), a certain Maria Francisca ('Vimieiro 8 de Abril de 1774', NCEFA-IANTT, 223), a Lady 'Jonston' in London ('Lisboa 17 de Maio de 80', NCEFA-IANTT, 223), the duke of Lafões ('Lisboa 19 de Novembro de 1780', NCEFA-IANTT, 223), Mme de Thun in Vienna ('Lisboa 20 de Maio de 1781' and 'Lisboa 9 de Junho de 1781', among others, NCEFA-IANTT, 223 and 224), Mme de Bombelles ('Caldas em 31 de Agosto de 1788', NCEFA-IANTT, 223), the marchioness of Niza ('Sim, minha linda amiga', NCEFA-IANTT, 222), the abbot José Correia da Serra ('Estremoz 9 de Janeiro de 78', NCEFA-IANTT, 224), probably William Julius Mickle, the English translator of the *Lusiadas*, by Luís de Camões ('Lisboa 21 de Dezembro de 81', NCEFA-IANTT, 223), and the viscountess of Barbacena in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil ('Caldas em 31 de agosto de 1788', NCEFA-IANTT, 223).

34. In a letter where the countess of Vimieiro speaks about the tradition of intellectual ladies in the sixteenth-century Portuguese court and the education of women, she says: 'devemos a Deus Mães que se não injuriam de o parecer, e de nos educar!' ('We owe God mothers that were not ashamed of looking like mothers and of teaching us', in 'me encanta a condescendencia com q me prometes', NCEFA-IANTT, 222), and writing about her own play *Osmia*, she says: 'Se devo crer ao voto dos Amigos, dou a Portugal uma coisa, que ainda não tem e que nem o feliz século de quinhentos produziu sem defeitos: serei eu capaz de tanto! para um homem não fora muito, porque trabalharia sobre os vestígios d'antiguidade, com as Luzes do século presente, não é coisa que mereça ir ao Index das coisas notáveis; mas para uma mulher no País em que eu nasci, e onde talvez se armam contra mim porque leio e porque vou à Academia sim é Heroísmo; com tudo não terei valor para que se imprima em minha vida, e como esta será /ao que promete/ de pouca duração vocês chorarão dobradamente quando lerem o que lhe deixo escrito' ('If I had to believe what my friends say, I give Portugal a thing that is still lacking, and that not even the happy sixteenth century was able to produce without defects: will I be capable of such a thing! For a man, it would not be much, because he will work over the remains of ancient times, with the Lights of the present century, it is not something that deserves to be in the Index of notable things; but for a woman, in the Country where I was born, and where people may be against me because I read and show up in the Academy, it is true Heroism; all in all, I will not have the courage to print it in my lifetime, and because it will be – as it shows – of short duration, you will cry twice when you read what I left written'). 'Lisboa 19 de Junho de 1781', NCEFA-IANTT, 223.

35. 'Vamos a fazer uma subscrição de que ele [o Duque de Lafões] é o motor para se fundar uma escola de desenho, de pintura e de escultura. Todas as Damas que manejamos o Lápis

assinaremos [...] [O] plano talvez se trace sobre a minha mesa; e os prémios para as obras que se coroarem é provável que saiam da bolsa de uma tua amiga' ('We are going to organise a fundraising in which he [the duke of Lafões] is the driving force, in order to establish a school of painting and sculpture. All the ladies that can use a pencil will sign for it [...] [T]he plan may be designed over my desk, and the prices for the crowned works will probably be from one of your friends' purses'). 'Lisboa 19 de Novembro de 1780', NCEA-IANTT, 223. '[E]u te agradeço por toda ela [a Academia], o interesse, que mostras pelo seu progresso, e se os nossos costumes o permitissem tu certamente estavas na lista; mas as tuas Luzes são tais, que podem ajudá-la muito comunica-lhas, que eu fico porque toda a boa gente que a compõe se te mostre agradecida' ('I thank you on its [the Academy's] behalf for the interest you show in its progress, and if our customs permitted it, you would certainly be on the list; but your Enlightenment is such that it can be really helpful. Let them know it, and I guarantee that all the good people in the Academy will show their gratefulness'), 'Lisboa 28 de Janeiro de 1781', NCEA-IANTT, 223. 'S. M. queria que minha Mãe acabasse a educação de sua Nora, e queria saber se o estado da sua saúde lho permitia' ('Her Majesty wanted my mother to complete the education of her daughter-in-law, and wanted to know if her health would allow it'). 'Lisboa 12 Abril 1785', NCEA-IANTT, 223.

36. The service as court lady was probably the most important source for new privileges and for the consolidation of old ones for aristocracy during the eighteenth century. Nuno Monteiro, *O crepúsculo dos grandes (1750–1832)* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda, 1998).

37. *Lília* was the nickname used by Mello Breyner to address Leonor de Almeida.

38. 'Eu vivi sempre na Corte aprendendo nos outros aquilo, de que devia acautelar-me, e tanto me serviu isso, que pelo silêncio, a que condenei as minhas trovas, consegui não perder o conceito de pessoas sérias, a quem ouvi algumas vezes: *para mim, mulher que faz versos tem perdido tudo*. Vê tu que consolação para a infeliz musa que me inspirava! Crê-me, minha Lília, não convém que o mundo saiba plenamente o que de nós confiou a natureza'. 'Estremoz 22 de Outubro de 1770', NCEA-IANTT, 222.

39. For instance, when she refuses to admit men's mentoring of women's education and literary production: 'they regret the scarce freedom ladies have for their instruction, as if for ladies to know more than them they would need men to be directors of their studies or testimonials, or censors of their works' ('lamentam a pôca liberdade, que as Senhoras têm para instruir-se; como se para elas saberem mais, do que eles, fosse preciso que eles fossem directores dos seus estudos ou testemunhas, e censores das suas obras'). 'Me encanta a condescendencia com q me prometes', NCEA-IANTT, 222.

40. Teresa de Mello Breyner, *Osmia* (Lisbon: Offic. da Academia Real das Sciencias, 1788).

41. Teresa de Mello Breyner, *Idéa de hum elogio historico de Maria Theresa archiduqueza de Austria, imperatriz viuva, rainha apostolica de Hungria, e de Bohemia, princeza soberana dos Paizes Baixos. Escrita em francez por M.M***** (Lisbon: Officina de Francisco Luiz Ameno. 1781).

42. 'Dá uma risada quando ouvires, que Osmia é do P.^o Francisco José Freire...' ('Laugh out loud when you hear it said that *Osmia* was written by Father Francisco José Freire...'). 'Alcentre em 24 de Janeiro de 1789', NCEA-IANTT, 223.

43. See the reference at note 35 above to the social interdiction on women becoming academics: 'if our customs permitted it, you would certainly be on the list ...'.

44. Theresa Ann Smith arrives at similar conclusions for the Spanish case, underlining the relevance of discussions on gender issues and the role of women in society throughout the eighteenth century: 'Emerging discourses on women altered women's actual place in society, but key to the story I tell is how shifting gender roles in turn shaped broader discourses. In addition, my work approaches the Spanish case on its own terms and in doing so demonstrates that gender was at the heart of Enlightenment in Spain. This book argues that gender debates are not merely a window through which scholars today can view Enlightenment principles at work, but rather that these

debates were central to reconfiguring Spain as an enlightened nation. In the eyes of those who witnessed it, redefining gender identities was critical to Spain's political, social, and economic modernization.' Theresa Ann Smith, *The Emerging Female Citizen: Gender and Enlightenment in Spain* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), p.7.

45. Teresa Leitão de Barros, *Escritoras de Portugal: génio feminino revelado na literatura portuguesa*, 2 vols (Lisbon: Tip. Artur, 1924).

46. Leitão de Barros, *Escritoras de Portugal*, vol. I:77.

47. Like Nicolau Tolentino de Almeida (see Claude Maffre, *Nicolau Tolentino de Almeida: obras completas*. vol. I, *Sonetos e quintilhas* (Porto: Campo das Letras, 2008), p.20, 54, 170, 171) and Francisco José Freire. See 'Estremoz 27 de Dezembro de 1772' (NCEA-IANTT, 223), where the countess orders the delivery of a monthly payment to him on her behalf.

48. Domitila Hormizinda Miranda de Carvalho was, at the same time, the first woman to study at the University of Coimbra and one of the first three women elected to a seat in the parliament in 1934, during the Estado Novo, the dictatorship of Dr Salazar. She graduated in mathematics in 1894 and philosophy a year later.

49. I understand *doxa* as defined by Bourdieu: 'an orthodoxy, a right, correct, dominant vision which has more often than not been imposed through struggles against competing visions. This means that the "natural attitude" mentioned by the phenomenologists, that is, the primary experience of the world of common sense, is a politically produced relation, as are the categories of perception that sustain it' ('une orthodoxie, une vision droite, dominante, que ne s'est imposée qu'au terme de luttés contre des visions concurrentes; et que "l'attitude naturelle" dont parlent les phénoménologues, c'est-à-dire l'expérience première du monde du sens commun, est un rapport politiquement construit, comme les catégories de perception qui la rendent possible'). Pierre Bourdieu, *Raisons pratiques: sur la théorie de l'action* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1994), p.128-9.

50. Elizabeth Dillon, *The Gender of Freedom: Fictions of Liberalism and the Literary Public Sphere* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), p.3.

51. Wendy Weston McLallen, *Affectionately Yours: Women's Correspondence Networks in Eighteenth-Century British America* (Tallahassee, FL: Florida State University, 2007).

52. McLallen, *Affectionately Yours*, p.3.

53. Répertoire is 'the aggregate of rules and materials which govern both the making and use of any given product. These rules and materials are thus indispensable for any procedure of production and consumption.' Itamar Even-Zohar, 'The "Literary System" ', in *Polysystem Studies*, special issue of *Poetics Today* 11:1 (1990), p.27-44.

54. Teresa de Mello Breyner, '22 de Maio de 1772' (NCEA-IANTT, 223); 'Vimr.º 7 de Mayo de 1772' (NCEA-IANTT, 222); and 'Vimr.º 30 d'Abril [de 1772]' (NCEA-IANTT, 222).

55. Teresa de Mello Breyner, 'Vimr.º 25 de Maio de 1772' (NCEA-IANTT, 224); 'Lisboa 3 de Outubro de 1783' (NCEA-IANTT, 223); 'Lx.a 11 de Abril de 87' (NCEA-IANTT, 223); 'Caldas da R.ª em 26 de Outubro de 1773' (NCEA-IANTT, 222); 'Virmº 25 de Maio de 1772' (NCEA-IANTT, 224); 'Estremoz 11 de Janr.º de 1771' (NCEA-IANTT, 222); 'Estremoz 21 de Março de 71' (NCEA-IANTT, 222).

56. For further discussion of the use of correspondence for promoting music repertoires, see Antia Cortiças Leira, 'A correspondência como meio de difusão do cânone: o caso de Metastasio e Gluck no epistolário Vimieiro-Oeynhausien', in Anastácio, *Correspondências*, 2005, p.89-101.

57. For further discussion of the concept of public space for the epistolary genre, see Elias J. Torres Feijó, 'Cartas apologéticas, cartas polemistas: as cartas apologéticas de Gertrudes Margarida de Jesus. Argumentaçom e inovaçom', in Anastácio, *Correspondências*, p.223-53.

58. Teresa de Mello Breyner, 'Estremoz 22 de Outubro de 1770', NCEA-IANTT, 222.

59. Particularly interesting for assessing her political opinions is the criticism made against the situation of the queen, as in the following: 'I would like to see her served as she deserves, and to

preach all around the world all the things this lady is and could be. I am greatly impatient when I see her reduced to a private life' ['Tomara vê-la sempre servida como ela o merece; e apregoar pelo mundo todo e que esta senhora é, e pode ser. Tenho uma suma impaciência quando a vejo reduzida a uma vida privada', in 'Lisboa [—]1 de Julho de 1781', NCEA-IANTT, 224.

60. Raquel Bello Vázquez, 'Dá uma risada quando ouvires ...', and *Mulher, nobre, ilustrada, dramaturga*.

61. Elizabeth Dillon, *The Gender of Freedom: Fictions of Liberalism and the Literary Public Sphere* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

62. Dillon, *The Gender of Freedom*, p.4.

63. Dillon, *The Gender of Freedom*, p.7.

64. McLallen, *Affectionately Yours*, p.32-3.

65. 'Se outra mais sincera, se deixa persuadir de lisonja, e entrega aos olhos de algum o que escreve no seu gabinete de estudo Oh meu Deus, que desgraça! in 'me encanta a condescendência com q me prometes'. NCEA-IANTT, 222.

66. 'a minha casa, onde eu vivo quasi sempre só com os meus livros algum de meus Irmãos, e o Duque que alguns momentos aqui passa é verdade que eles valem por todos os que podiam vir atormentar-nos e oprimir-nos com turbilhões de nadas.' In 'Lisboa 19 de Novembro de 1780', NCEA-IANTT, 223.

67. 'Se a saúde me dá forças, o meu lápis, e os meus livros, me servem de companhia.' in 'Lisboa 11 de Dezembro de 1780', NCEA-IANTT, 223.

68. 'Tenho uma bela casa moderadamente nobre como convém à minha situação presente, e entre todas tenho um gabinete digno de tu o habitares Nele tenho os meus livros, os meus desenhos, e as tuas cartas com pocas mais. São todas as minhas riquezas, e quando as repasso acho-me opolenta, e digo que pode fazer falta a quem soube ganhar a amizade de boa gente?' in 'Lisboa 19 de Fevereiro de 82', NCEA-IANTT, 223.

69. 'Lisboa 19 de Novembro de 1780', NCEA-IANTT, 223.

70. 'Eu tomara [...] começar [...] a predicar o bellissimo projecto do canal des[de] o tejo [a]té [o] guadiana. Projecto calculado exactamente por deligência da Academia, e feito com um trabalho, e uma exacção digna dos talentos do M.^r de Vallaré [...] Eu dizia ontem no canto do meu gabinete, que se fizesse uma companhia, e que eu entrava nela com o fundo das minhas joias.' In 'Lisboa 9 de março de 1784', NCEA-IANTT, 222.

71. Sonja Boon, 'Performing the Woman of Sensibility: Suzanne Curchod Necker and the Hospice de Charité', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 32:2 (2009), p.235-54.

72. Boon, 'Performing the Woman of Sensibility', p.235.

73. 'por fruto da amizade gozásemos aqueles prazeres que ignoram os Heróis do nosso século', in 'Sim, minha linda amiga'. NCEA-IANTT, 222.

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