Traveling Together as a Couple: Gender, Diplomacy, and Cultural Mediation in the Life of the Countess of Fernán Núñez, Spanish Ambassadress in Lisbon and Paris (1778–91)

Accepted manuscript of the essay published in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 52 (Spring 2023), pp. 199-225.

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ABSTRACT

This essay aims to contribute to a better understanding of the role played by women as cultural mediators in the eighteenth century. Its starting point is the little-known figure of María, Countess of Fernán Núñez, Spanish ambassadress to Portugal (1777–87) and France (1787–91), who led a transnational life marked by travel, international courts, and embassies—all spaces of sociability traditionally linked to the study of cultural mediation, an area that in recent years has begun to be considered in relation to gender. The Countess's experience sheds light on the contributions made by diplomats' spouses to the political and cultural life of Europe and on the ways in which a wife and husband could work as a team. Methodologically, this case study also provides an opportunity for reflecting on the sources with which we can reconstruct the cultural mediation carried out by women, who tend to be far less visible in official records.

KEYWORDS

ambassadress, working couple, transnational lives, Maria, Countess of Fernán Núñez, travel, cultural mediation, diplomacy

"Several foreign diplomats went to the opera house and then to the home of Madame the ambassadress of Spain, where she held a circle."[1] This morsel of information about the Spanish *ambassadrisse*'s involvement in the cultural and social life of Paris was logged in the foreigner surveillance records kept by the city's police force on 1 January 1791. It is by no means an isolated reference to the lady in question. Although she was not herself the Spanish Crown's appointed representative in France, as the ambassador's wife, she was expected to assume certain duties and responsibilities. The police records, which kept

track, among other things, of the movements of diplomats accredited by the French court, tell us much about the intense political, social, and cultural activity of these men and their wives. The Spanish ambassadress is mentioned several times, with reference to her participation in Parisian cultural events, both with and without her husband, and to her role as the hostess of social gatherings attended by a regular group of people (her *cercle* or *société*). Her name was María de la Esclavitud Sarmiento, and she was the wife of Carlos Gutiérrez de los Ríos, sixth Count of Fernán Núñez. Like many other noblemen's wives, she served as ambassadress consort, accompanying her husband as he took up his various diplomatic postings, which meant crossing geographical, linguistic, and cultural borders. When the Countess traveled with her husband to their first diplomatic posting in Lisbon in 1778, her level of education was not sufficiently sophisticated to enable her to move with ease in the transnational world that characterized courtly and aristocratic life in Enlightenment Europe. Through studies and experience, she gradually remedied this situation, to the extent that she was identified as an active and individualized agent with her own social circle in the exacting environment of the French court at the dawn of the Revolution. When she and her husband had to leave Paris, they left behind all their belongings, including two libraries of over 1,600 volumes, primarily in French, comprising the "books of his lordship" and those "of her ladyship." It was through the efforts of the widowed Countess some years later that these were finally transported across the Pyrenees and incorporated into the family library in Spain.

Travel, international courts, and embassies are all spaces traditionally linked to the study of cultural mediation, an issue that in recent years has begun to be considered from the perspective of the female experience. Cultural mediators, cultural brokers, "*passeurs culturels*," or "go-betweens" are all terms for agents who facilitated communication "between parties separated by physical, social, and political distances."[2]

Because their role involved representation and negotiation, ambassadors sought to integrate themselves into the culture and society to which they had been sent, without losing touch with their homeland. Once posted, they had to operate at court and within the diplomatic community, but also in the urban spaces of aristocratic, *mondaine* sociability—all of which were, by their very nature, transnational stages. The cosmopolitan mindset of the aristocratic way of life was always conducive to the crossing of physical and virtual boundaries. Connections of kinship or friendship, linguistic skills, and participation in cultural communities of varying degrees of formality (such as academies, salons, or intellectual networks) resulted in the circulation of knowledge, ideas, and objects across borders.[3] Thanks to their social background and the nature of their diplomatic role, ambassadors—and ambassadresses—were among the leading agents of mediation. Tom Verschaffel and his collaborators have argued that "a cultural mediator can be considered as a person, as a function and as a discursive and practicing instance."[4] This essay will explore who this particular Spanish ambassadress was, what her social background and level of education were, in which formal and informal networks and spaces of sociability she moved—both alone and with her husband—during their travels and postings, and what concrete practices she employed in mediating between languages and cultures.

Methodologically, this case study has a number of distinctive features. Virtually nothing has been written about María until now, and the sources available are scarce and fragmentary. Born into a provincial aristocratic family in the far north-western Spanish region of Galicia, María left her home in 1777 when, at the age of 17, she married the sixth Count of Fernán Núñez. As his consort, she began a new, itinerant life, spending extended periods of time in Madrid, Lisbon, Paris, and Louvain. Hers became a life of travel and moving in courtly circles, of diplomatic obligations, book-collecting, and

interests in lineage. María bore her husband nine children, six of whom survived into adulthood. Although María was the Count's constant companion for the rest of his life, there has been far less written about her than about her enlightened aristocrat of a husband, who was a well-known bibliophile, soldier, traveler, and the Spanish ambassador to Lisbon between 1777 and 1787 and to revolutionary Paris between 1787 and 1791. Not only did she accompany him on all his travels (the two diplomatic postings and the various journeys they undertook between leaving Paris in 1791 and returning to Spain in 1794), but, at his express wish, she remained head of the family after his death.[5] And yet she is either absent from or makes only a very marginal appearance in all of the works written about the Count. The Countess herself has been the subject of only a single article analyzing the correspondence she maintained after she was widowed with her stepson, Camilo Gutiérrez de los Ríos, in 1808, a particularly turbulent time in Spanish political life.[6] In addition to revealing that she was clearly well informed about the events of the day (through rumors, press reports, and news gleaned from influential friends and relatives), her letters also set out her opinions on these matters, demonstrating that she was "a woman of strong character, quite active in everything relating to the interests of her family, and fascinated by political affairs."[7]

The present essay will not only shed more light on the little-known figure of the sixth Countess of Fernán Núñez, particularly her years as ambassadress, but also aims to contribute to a better understanding of the role played by women as cultural mediators in the eighteenth century. This is a field opening up in various different areas of research, including the study of women travelers, the analysis of queens and their entourages as agents and catalysts of cultural transfer, and recent investigations into the role of the ambassadress. My account of the transnational life of María, Countess of Fernán Núñez is intended to add to this discussion.[8] Her story also provides an opportunity for reflecting

on the sources available for such an analysis. Women are less visible in official records, and although travel journals, letters, and other ego-documents written by women have been discovered and studied (and have facilitated access to the experiences of female subjects in the worlds of court culture, aristocratic sociability, and the "republic of letters"), materials of this type are not always available. This may be because they have not survived, or simply because such writing practices were more widespread among men, which is certainly true of travel journals. Where no letters or diaries exist, it is necessary to gather and interpret scattered, indirect, and fragmentary evidence and to read it critically with an eye toward the way in which the subject was seen by others—for the most part, men. This is the situation we face with the Countess of Fernán Núñez. Although plenty of documentation is available with which to analyze the Count's life, hers is much more elusive, especially as far as the years of their marriage are concerned. Any sources relating to her experience are both unquestionably fewer in number and more indirect in nature than those relating to the life and career of her husband, a reality that highlights the differences imposed by gender not only on the course of people's lives, but also on the records that remain of them. Despite the scarcity of documentary evidence, however, there are epistemological frameworks that enable us to reconstruct this woman's experience; contextualize her within the familial, cultural, and political history with which her life was interwoven; and analyze her role as a cultural mediator. Using the biographical information available and focusing on the function of the ambassadress and on the cosmopolitan aristocratic culture of the day, this essay aims to contribute to our knowledge about the gendered workings of diplomacy and cultural mediation, highlighting the transnational lives of ambassadors (both male and female) by looking at their sociable practices and their role as agents in knowledge circulation.

Consorts, Mobility, and Cultural Mediation

In recent years, gender studies has had a powerful impact on research into early modern travel literature, royal courts, diplomatic history, and cultural mediation. Analyses of women's experience of travel, which originally focused on the nineteenth century, have gradually broadened to include journeys made by nuns and noblewomen in earlier periods, with the stories of British female travelers garnering particular attention.[9] The fields of family history and court studies have been adding to our understanding for several decades now by incorporating the maternal line and female consorts into their narratives.[10] The journeys undertaken by princesses and their entourages have proved to be an especially fruitful area of research, one that has added significantly to our understanding of female travel and the political and cultural roles played by women. One of the issues that emerges when analyzing these women is their degree of mobility and its impact on political practices and cultural transfers. More often than not, it was women who left their families and (geographical and cultural) homelands behind in order to marry and be integrated into other dynasties. These princesses did not travel alone, but rather were accompanied by their courts. Female households—the entourages of female rulers—have also begun to be studied as transnational spaces of court politics and culture and as places and agents of cultural exchange.[11] As Giulia Calvi notes, "Transnational marriage alliances were indeed at the core of international relations, and a distinguishing feature in the study of early modern female elites is the systematic displacement which the marriage exchange produced."[12] These marriages thus became significant channels of cultural mediation, alongside other practices that have traditionally received more attention, such as travel and diplomacy, and analysis has shown that women of royal or noble families often played key roles as brokers in organizing such alliances.[13] The degree of power wielded by such women as politico-cultural mediators enabled them to serve as

agents, instruments, and catalysts of influence and change.[14]

The agency of elite women in courtly culture and politics is today beyond dispute; this underlines the importance of taking informal spaces of political activity into account, spaces that were not exclusively feminine. As Jeroen Duindam contends, "the line between male and female does not match any division between formal and informal, with the single exception that women other than the queen regnant or regent were rarely expected to attend the council, a situation they shared with a large majority of males at court." Although women were excluded from formalized decision-making and thus almost invisible in official records, a ruler and his advisors could nonetheless elect to cast either men or women "in shady roles as intermediaries or agents in diplomacy and decision-making." Because women living at court were close to those in power and held positions of trust, they had opportunities to influence political decisions and to promote the interests of their families, friends, or clients. As Duindam concludes, "household and government, men and women in court office and politics, [and] politics and culture can be studied effectively only in their constant interaction."[15]

In the field of political history, the study of diplomacy has also been hugely enriched by the adoption of approaches based in cultural and gender studies. The New Diplomatic History has seen a profound revision in what kinds of sources, spaces, objects, subjects, and languages are considered when attempting to reconstruct the knowledge and practice of early modern diplomacy.[16] Attention to the everyday, go-betweens, gift-giving practices, and cross-cultural and cross-confessional exchanges are all now common elements in diplomatic studies.[17] While many works dealing with noblewomen, female rulers, female households, and dynastic marriages have shed light on the role of women in international politics, there continue to be a lack of studies specifically examining their place in the history of diplomacy. *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since*

1500 set out to redress this absence, and I hope to take its analysis still further. Spanning a broad chronological and geographical range, the cases considered in this collection highlight the agency of women, the importance of their family connections and friendships, and the use they made of correspondence and physical proximity (whether in the private apartments of palaces or the semi-public arena of salons)—resources and spaces that enabled them to operate as newsgatherers and political and cultural mediators, either alone or as part of a matrimonial team.[18]

The idea of a matrimonial team, or working couple, is particularly relevant when it comes to conceptualizing the role of the ambassadress consort. In recent years, the term *Arbeitspaar*—traditionally used to designate artisan, merchant, and peasant couples who formed a single unit of work and production in the pre-industrial economy—has been applied to royal or noble couples and, in diplomatic history specifically, to spouses incorporated into their husbands' profession, a phenomenon that has been studied with particular reference to the twentieth century.[19] Ambassadors' wives played a fundamental role in various aspects of early modern diplomacy, despite the precarious nature of their official status and the vagueness of the term *ambassadress*, which could refer to both the wife of an ambassador and a female diplomat. In fact, the word first began to be used in European courts in the sixteenth century as ambassadors' wives started taking on new ceremonial, social, and political responsibilities. According to Friedrich Karl von Moser's *L'ambassadrice et ses droits* (1752), the first woman to be recognized with that title was the Countess of Olivares, wife of the Spanish ambassador to Rome, in 1585.[20] That the term seems to have originated in Italy is not surprising, since the role of permanent ambassador itself also began there. The Italian roots of the word can be seen in Spanish dictionaries of the day. The *Tesoro de la Lengua Castellana* (1611) includes the word "embasjatrize" (halfway between Spanish "embajadora" and Italian "ambasciatrice"),

which is defined as "an ambassador's wife." Significantly, it appears not as an entry in its own right, but rather as part of the entry for "embaxada" [embassy, in the sense of a diplomatic mission]. By contrast, in the *Diccionario de Autoridades* (1732) the word "embajadora" does appear, as a Spanish word and as its own entry. Here it has a dual definition: a woman sent with credentials from one prince to another, or the wife of an ambassador.[21] It is therefore possible to trace the rise of the ambassadress as a force within diplomatic culture during the period following the creation of the role in the sixteenth century.[22] These women—either in company with their husbands or alone—crossed geographical, linguistic, and cultural borders, participated in ceremonial life at court and in elite society, played an active role in political communications and negotiations, and operated as cultural mediators in an extremely diverse range of ways and spaces. In what follows, I will analyze the ways in which the sixth Countess of Fernán Núñez assumed these functions, based on our knowledge of her presence in various spaces of sociability, her access to learning and knowledge, and her role in the recovery of two Enlightenment libraries built up over the course of her travels.

Lisbon: "This small embassy serving her as a school for those to come"

For María de la Esclavitud Sarmiento, marriage to the sixth Count of Fernán Núñez meant the start of a life of travel and her entry into the diplomatic world. This entailed not only the crossing of geographical and linguistic borders, but also, fundamentally, a socio-cultural transition. Her duties as the wife of a cultivated, high-ranking aristocrat demanded a level of education she did not initially possess. The environment of the Portuguese court, however, allowed her to acquire, through study and practical experience, the skills she needed in order to act as ambassadress consort. María (1760–1810) was the only daughter of Diego Sarmiento, fourth Marquis of Castel-Moncayo, and

his wife Joaquina Cáceres. Before her marriage, she lived a provincial life, splitting her time between Galicia and the central-western region of Extremadura, where her family also owned land. In 1777, the year in which she married, she was 17 and had had a less sophisticated upbringing than her husband, who was then 35 and quite a man of the world. Carlos José Gutiérrez de los Ríos, sixth Count of Fernán Núñez, had been educated at the *Colegio de Nobles* in Madrid, then embarked on a career in the military, and completed his education by traveling around Europe in the style of the Grand Tour. Before their wedding, he went to Galicia to meet his future bride. After their first encounter, in Pontevedra, in which they exchanged "words without saying anything … sidelong glances, observations and all other things that are natural, allowed, and indeed necessary in such cases," both parties were left "content, in agreement, satisfied and on a footing of trust and friendly sincerity that promises constant happiness in the years to come, and which has banished—for the period before the wedding—the fear born of not knowing one another." During his visit, the couple breakfasted, lunched, and dined together and went to the opera, danced, and conversed with each other. The Count noted in his journal that he had taken leave of María with an embrace and that he felt that the 120-league journey, at a cost of 400 doubloons, had been well worth the effort.[23]

A few months later, he shared his impressions with an old friend, Prince Emanuel of Salm-Salm, with whom he had maintained a regular correspondence since 1768.[24] In a letter of 2 June 1777, he mentioned how good-natured his future wife and her family were, noting María's docile character; her noble, but gentle bearing; her talent for dancing (that marked her out from other ladies); and the sincere and amicable relationship he wanted to establish with her. He did, however, express regret about her lack of a refined education.[25] Not long after the wedding, Carlos was appointed Spanish ambassador to Portugal. On 23 September 1778, the couple left for Lisbon, the court at which they would

live until 1787 and where four of their nine children would be born.[26] The first, Carlos, the future seventh Count and first Duke of Fernán Núñez, came into the world soon after their arrival in the Portuguese capital, the Countess having undertaken the journey during the seventh month of her pregnancy. Her new husband had suggested that she stay in Spain, given her condition, but she apparently insisted on accompanying him and was thus, in his words, "subject to the obligations of an ambassadress."[27]

The Count regarded Lisbon (where the demands of sociability at court and beyond were not excessive) as the ideal place for his wife to complete her education and prepare for life in the more high-profile embassies he had in his sights. In other words, as he explained to Prince Emanuel in a letter of 15 March 1779, in Lisbon she could "apply herself to French and the other points of education in which she is lacking and, this small embassy serving her as a school for those to come, we shall wait here for as long as it takes to progress to that of London or Paris … I am very happy with her, since despite these minor deficiencies, born of her childhood, she has an excellent heart … loves me dearly, and I flatter myself that with constancy, time, and patience the rest will come."[28]

In spite of the differences between them in terms of rank and education, as noted by the Count on various occasions, his marital relationship was cordial. It appears that the couple were gradually creating the intimate and happy friendship between husband and wife so fashionable in Enlightenment discourse. Having traveled from Lisbon to Madrid to deal with some political matters, the Count wrote to his friend on 15 March 1784 that "I am the happiest man in this world. I have been granted a wife virtuous in character and thinking, and entirely lacking in hypocrisy, fanaticism, and bigotry. She loves me, I love her, we are close friends, we walk together … each consulting the other, each keeping the other's secrets."[29]

As far as their life at court is concerned, the Count told the Prince that he was

spending quite a bit of time alone, both because of the "spirit of the country" and because of the ongoing consequences of the Lisbon earthquake of 1755. Diplomats, the Count explained, go to the royal palace only six or eight times a year and "although those of Spain, Naples, and Sardinia meet every Saturday, it is in private and scarcely anyone else is present." There were no public promenades or performances and no socializing in private homes. "Society is therefore reduced to the diplomatic corps," whose members came together in gatherings attended by a small number of Portuguese nobles. These circumstances obliged him to lead the life of a "semi-bourgeois ambassador," spending time with his wife in the intimacy of their home, where they took pleasure in their garden, books, and music and in looking after the house and attending to the upbringing of their children.[30] There were in fact separate spaces in their home specifically devoted to those activities. According to an inventory made in Lisbon in September 1783, they had a music room with "a large cupboard containing various instruments," in addition to the English pianoforte, organ, and harpsichord to be found in other rooms—as well as an ante-library and a library housing books, maps, prints, and drawings.[31]

Looking beyond the image created in his letters, however, it seems that the Count and Countess were in fact part of Lisbon social circles. During his ambassadorship, they formed a network of friendships with various other foreign diplomats and with Portuguese aristocrats, notably those associated both with other European courts and with the dissemination of Enlightenment ideas and practices. So far as we can deduce from the Count's correspondence and travel journal, Madame Lepselter (Isabelita Aranu) and her husband, Baron von Lebzeltern Collenbach, plenipotentiary minister of the Habsburg Empire at the court of Portugal, were their "good friends and constant companions." So too was Prince Rafadale, the Neapolitan ambassador to Lisbon. The Count also maintained close links with another friend of Prince Emanuel's: the Duke of Braganza

(second Duke of Lafões), who had returned to his native Portugal in 1779 after years of traveling around Europe and forging links in Vienna and, after a stay in England, with members of the Royal Society in London. The Duke also spent time in Turkey and Egypt.[32] More names were gradually added to those mentioned by the Count in his correspondence of 1779. When he and his wife left Lisbon in 1787, he wrote in his travel journal of his sadness at leaving behind "many good friends," such as "the Duke of Alafoens [Lafões]; the Countess of Ficallo; the Count and Countess of Vimieiro; the Marquis and Marchioness of Tancos; *monsieur* and *madame* Lebzeltern, ambassador of the Emperor; Monsignor Belsiomi, nuncio of his Holiness; the Count of Front, the Sardinian ambassador; and others, who showed me with the most sincere affection the same friendship I felt for them." As for royalty, he mentioned the Queen of Portugal; the Infanta Carlota, daughter of Charles IV of Spain, who married Prince João of Portugal; and her governess, the Countess of Lumiares, "our friend."[33]

This portrait of a Lisbon in which the aristocracy held few banquets, parties, or receptions and civilized society revolved instead around the city's merchants and ambassadors also emerges from the writings of other foreign visitors to Portugal, including adventurer, writer, and diplomat Giuseppe Gorani, who was in the service of the future Marquis of Pombal between 1765 and 1767, and French physician Joseph-Barthélemy-François Carrère.[34] Other sources, such as the letters of Arthur William Costigan (who visited Lisbon in the 1770s), and the diary of the wealthy traveler, collector, and writer William Beckford, or that of the French ambassador, the Marquis of Bombelles (both written in the 1780s), paint a picture of a more dynamic social scene.[35] In the journal covering his ambassadorship in Lisbon between 1786 and 1788, the Marquis described the receptions he and other ambassadors hosted, where the guests included figures such as the Count of Fernán Núñez, Baron von Lebzeltern, the Count of

Front, Robert Walpole (the British envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary), and Daniel Hogguer (the Dutch ambassador). It is worth noting the Marquis's description of the reception given by the Spanish ambassador and his wife at the Palácio das Necessidades, home to the Spanish embassy, on the occasion of the birthday of King Charles IV's son, Fernando, to which fifty-two guests came and at which, as well as good music, there was a very grand banquet. The Marquis adds to our knowledge of Lisbon sociability by mentioning, for example, a meeting between his children and those of the Tancos and Fernán Núñez families and the visits, promenades, and audiences of the ambassadresses consort. He recorded the visit paid by "the Spanish ambassadress" to his wife, and what he saw as the ambassador's excessive anger when the music at one party began before he and his wife had arrived and mentioned the disagreements between the Countess of Fernán Núñez and Mrs. Walpole, wife of the British envoy. He also wrote about receptions hosted by Portuguese nobles, such as the Duke of Lafões, the Count of Vimieiro, and the Marquesa of Penalva.

Significant figures who were part of the Count and Countess of Fernán Núñez's intimate circle, in addition to their fellow diplomats, included the Count and Countess of Vimieiro, Countess of Ficalho, and the Duke of Lafões, all leading lights in the social, political, and cultural life of Lisbon during the couple's time there: an age in which its elite came together at salons known as *assembleias*. The historiography on sociability in Enlightenment Portugal all points to the fact that, in addition to the sheer destruction it caused, the earthquake of 1755 also acted as a turning point. A new kind of social interaction emerged in the years that followed, one shaped by the growing number of foreign citizens who were settling in Lisbon, by an increasing awareness of the customs of other places (France, in particular), by the modernization policies implemented by the Marquis de Pombal and the latter's own experience of life elsewhere in Europe as

ambassador to London and Vienna, and by the spread of a "new" Catholicism more open to the world, as expressed in the works of St. Francis de Sales. Lisbon's *assembleias* were invitation-only, mixed-gender gatherings that took place in private homes, generally on a weekly basis. They were organized and hosted by married women: a light meal was usually served, and there were readings, poetry improvisations, musical performances, singing, and dancing.[36] Queen María I's ascent to the throne in 1777 not only allowed many aristocratic families who had been exiled during the Pombal regime to return to the capital, but also placed questions regarding women's right to govern and the role they should occupy in society at the heart of intellectual and political debate. The Vimieiros were one of the families who came back to Lisbon in 1777, and the Countess, Teresa de Mello Breyner, was the hostess of one of the most prestigious *assembleias* of the time. One of her regular guests was the Duke of Lafões, who spent a lot of time with members of the diplomatic community and hosted his own gatherings attracting the cream of Lisbon society.[37] Another was the Abbé José Correia da Serra, the philosopher, diplomat, politician, statesman, and botanist who, together with Lafões, founded Lisbon's Academy of Sciences in 1780. The name of Teresa's husband, Sancho de Faro e Sousa, also appears on its list of founders, but hers does not, although she is known to have played a part in its establishment. There was a portrait of Lafões, meanwhile, in the Fernán Núñez residence in Lisbon, underscoring the close personal and intellectual connection the Count and Countess enjoyed with one of the leading figures of Enlightenment science in Portugal.[38]

Lisbon's *assembleias* enabled the formation of social networks of intellectuals (both male and female), whose ideas circulated either orally or in writing. They were also a forum for the dissemination of ideas from elsewhere, with letters from abroad being read aloud to all present. The Countess of Vimieiro's correspondents included Leonor de

Almeida, Countess of Oyenhausen (and future fourth Marchioness of Alorna) and ambassadress consort in Vienna; Maria Wilhelmine, Countess Thun, also resident in Vienna; Marie-Caroline Murray, the Brussels-based author of a tribute to the Archduchess Maria Theresa that Vimieiro translated into Portuguese; and an Englishwoman named Johnston.[39] As for Lafões, he maintained a correspondence with the Emperor Joseph of Austria. Participating in these élite social gatherings gave attendees the relational, intellectual, and symbolic capital they needed in the struggle for power in court society.

We have no evidence to prove that the Count and Countess of Fernán Núñez were among Teresa de Mello Breyner's guests, but we do know they were closely connected to many of those in her circle. As well as hosting *assembleias*, the Count and Countess of Vimieiro were guests, in their turn, at receptions held by the Spanish and Imperial ambassadors.[40] Teresa de Mello Breyner mentioned the Spanish ambassador and his wife, and their banquets and parties, several times in her correspondence with Leonor de Almeida. In a letter of 16 December 1781, for example, she noted that the couple had held a dance for a select number of guests that had lasted until seven in the morning, although she herself had not been able to attend because she had been unwell. On 1 April 1783, she wrote to her friend that the ambassador had hosted a musical performance to which members of the nobility had been invited, but also many merchants' wives. On 26 April 1783, she again noted that the ambassador had been giving parties for various reasons and that so many people came to these events that they could not all be suitable guests—some were sincere, but others were foolish, quick-tempered, or indiscreet. Finally, on 11 April 1787, she relayed the news that the Count and Countess of Fernán Núñez had left Lisbon.

The connection between the Fernán Núñez and Vimieiro families extended to the

Palace and the Portuguese royal family. On her mother's side, Teresa de Mello Breyner came from a line of women who had served the court. Her grandmother had traveled to Portugal from Austria as part of the retinue of the Archduchess Maria Anna, the bride-to-be of King João V, and Teresa's mother, Isabel Josefa de Breyner, was a lady-in-waiting, granted the title of Countess of Ficalho by Queen María I in 1780. At the time, plans were under way for a marriage between Princess Carlota Joaquina of Spain and Prince João of Portugal—a union in which the Count of Fernán Núñez played a key role. In 1785, Isabel was asked to become lady-in-waiting to Carlota, but she turned down the post for financial reasons. Brought up at court, her daughter Teresa received a good education in Latin and the sciences. She went on to forge contacts with the most important writers of the day, including António Dinis da Cruz e Silva, Father Manuel do Cenáculo (tutor of Prince João), and Correia da Serra, all of whom attended her *assembleia*, along with other members of the Academy of Belles-Lettres. Teresa de Mello Breyner wrote two texts vindicating the role of female rulers, both of which were published anonymously: the 1781 translation of Marie-Caroline Murray's work on Maria Theresa already mentioned, and a tragedy, Osmia (1788), which was awarded a prize by Lisbon's Royal Academy of Sciences, as well as being translated into Spanish and staged in 1798.[41]

While much of the Count of Fernán Núñez's time as ambassador was taken up with the negotiations and other political commitments associated with his role, the Count of Fernán Núñez did not neglect his domestic surroundings or his cultural and artistic interests. According to Antonio Vigara, while the Count was in Lisbon, he remained in regular contact with his nephew and friend, the twelfth Duke of the Infantado (Pedro de Alcántara de Toledo y Silva). Indeed, the Duke arranged for various books and works of art to be sent to the Count from Paris.[42] The Count was similarly assisted in purchasing furniture and porcelain from England by Thomas Robinson, second Baron Grantham, the

British ambassador to Spain, and his brother Frederick.[43] And the Count himself acted as an intermediary in arranging for the transport of timber from Brazil to the Spanish court. A great bibliophile, he also continued to expand his library. When it came to buying books and cataloguing his latest acquisitions, the Count was helped by the distinguished Valencian cosmographer Juan Bautista Muñoz, founder of the General Archive of the Indies in Seville. In 1785, having been charged with writing an updated history of the New World, Muñoz was eager to consult archives in both Spain and Portugal. He and Manuel do Cenáculo (a member of Teresa de Mello Breyner's circle) had met in Valencia and continued to correspond with one another on a regular basis. Muñoz told Cenáculo that, on the advice of their mutual friend José Correia da Serra, he was going to visit various archives and libraries in Lisbon, including the holdings of the Count of Fernán Núñez, in search of materials about the Americas. And it was the Spanish ambassador who persuaded Queen Maria I to grant Muñoz permission to work at the Torre do Tombo, Portugal's national archive, where he was aided by Correia da Serra.[44]

As ambassadress consort, the Countess of Fernán Núñez both witnessed and participated in the various aspects of sociability just described and was part of the erudite culture of a court and society that, despite being situated on the periphery of Europe, nevertheless fostered close political, intellectual, and cultural ties with London, Vienna, Paris, and Madrid. María left no accounts of her journey to or time in Lisbon: no letters, journals, or any other kind of text. No catalog survives of the family library that Muñoz visited, and we have no direct evidence of her taste in books, only the assumptions we can make based on that of her husband and his mention of her need to improve her education. Interestingly, in the portraits painted of the Count and his wife during their Lisbon years by the Irish artist Thomas Hickey, both are dressed in the English style fashionable at the time, and the Countess has a book open on her lap.[45] In the refuge of

their Lisbon home, she was able to devote herself to reading, music, and the art of intimate conversation. Together with the opportunities she had to interact with the city's aristocratic society (receptions, parties, dances, dinners, promenades, and audiences that required an awareness of protocol and diplomatic precedence), this reading and conversation enabled María de la Esclavitud Sarmiento to acquire tools and experience during her years in Lisbon that were unquestionably good training for her next destination.

Paris: Her own circle, her own books

The Fernán Núñez family had connections in Paris that worked in their favor. On his maternal side, Carlos was related to the Rohan Chabot family. His mother was Charlotte Félicité Rohan Chabot, daughter of Louis II Bretagne Alain de Rohan-Chabot, fourth Duke of Rohan and a Peer of France, and his wife, Françoise de Roquelaure. In fact, in her will of 1750, the widowed fifth Countess of Fernán Núñez had indicated that her children, Carlos and Escolástica, should be taken to Paris to be brought up as wards of her brother, Louis-Marie-Bretagne Dominique de Rohan-Chabot, who had by then inherited the title of Duke of Rohan. King Ferdinand VI was opposed to this idea, however, and took Carlos and his sister under his own protection instead. Thus, the sixth Count of Fernán Núñez first visited Paris in 1774, as part of the European travels he undertook before his marriage. According to his travel journal, he arrived in the city on 16 March, and stayed with his uncle and aunt until 6 April. The only purpose of his visit was that of "seeing and getting to know my relatives; I did not present myself at court and I spent all my time with the family and in society, without attempting to see all that this great crossroads of Europe has to offer."[46] He went back to the French capital on 21 January 1775 and this time was presented at Versailles, thanks to the mediation of the

Spanish ambassador, the Count of Aranda.[47] His stay was shorter than he had planned because he was ordered by the court in Madrid to rejoin his regiment in Cartagena, from which a Spanish invasion of Algiers was about to be launched. The Count left Paris on 9 May, but this second visit did give him the opportunity to observe and write about the character of its inhabitants and some of the local customs: "Paris is the height of all that is both good and bad." He mentioned the wise, prudent, and mature conversations that could be had in the city, with many people of good sense and wide knowledge of the world, but he also warned of the many vices and intrigues to which one was exposed there. We know from his journal that there were many foreigners in Paris at the time and that it was essential to have an introduction in order to be admitted to the right homes. Parisians enjoyed gathering with their friends and moving freely about the city—under the watchful gaze of the local police. The Count also noted how careful you had to be in order to ensure that ladies did not give you a nickname that would bring you disgrace, and how, conversely, praise from one of them could make you the center of attention, sought after by all society.[48]

Twelve years later, on 7 October 1787, the Count returned to Paris as the Spanish ambassador, now accompanied by his wife and children, along with a retinue of no fewer than fifty people.[49] They stayed with his uncle, the Duke of Rohan, before setting up house in the luxurious Hôtel de Soyecourt.[50] Details of the arrival of the new ambassadorial couple and all of their movements thereafter were logged in the foreigner surveillance records that were kept by the Paris police and periodically reported to the Foreign Minister, the Count of Vergennes.[51] The police report on the arrival of the Count and Countess of Fernán Núñez includes a description of the new ambassador's rank and family background and details regarding his financial situation; it also mentions the cordial relationship he enjoyed with his wife, who is throughout referred to as "Mme

l'ambassatrice d'Espagne." These records reveal the intense social activity into which they were swept up as members of the diplomatic community in Paris. In addition to describing their visits to Versailles, the reports catalogue the walks they took, the times they went out on horseback, their trips to the theater and the opera, and their attendance both at receptions held in the homes of foreign diplomats (the ambassadors of Venice, Sweden, Britain, Sardinia, and the Habsburg Empire, among others) and soirées and dinners hosted by the likes of Mme de la Reynière and the Countess of Boufflers, the patron of Jean-Jacques Rousseau. The Count and Countess of Fernán Núñez also frequently met up with the Duke and Duchess of the Infantado, both in Paris and at the ducal home in Issy, where the Fernán Núñez children spent long periods. While they were in Paris, María gave birth to three more children: twin sons, Luis and Antonio, on 24 August 1788, and a daughter, Bruna, on 31 October 1789. Many of the police reports explicitly note that the ambassador and his wife attended social activities together. Interestingly, from 1791 onwards there are also references to María hosting regular gatherings of her own "circle" at their home.[52] As well as these domestic *soirées*, the Countess would also go to the theater accompanied by those of her circle.[53]

The Count and Countess kept an open house and received visitors jointly, with Sundays set aside for fellow Spaniards who were part of the Society for the Preservation of the Language. Founded by Carlos on 1 January 1788, the latter was a forty-strong group whose number included his wife; other eminent members of the Spanish aristocracy living in and around Paris (the Duchess of the Infantado, the Count of Arboré, the Marquis of Ureña, the Marquis de la Rosa, the Duchess of Beaufort, and Antonia Galabert and Teresa Cabarrús—the wife and daughter, respectively, of the financier Francisco de Cabarrús); men of science and letters, such as Tomás de Veri and Agustín de Betancourt; and members of the military, including Juan Senén de Contreras and Jorge Juan Guillelmi.

Its aim was to act as a space of sociability in which those present could help one another to improve their knowledge of the Spanish language and protect it from foreign influence. When in doubt, they deferred to the authority of the Dictionary of the Spanish Royal Academy, hence the motto of the Society: *Dudo, Consulto, Conservo* [I question, I consult, I preserve].

Paris made intense social demands on the ambassadorial couple, and the boundaries between professional and personal relationships and between political and recreational conversation were not always clear-cut. With its distinguished circles of sociability and wide-ranging leisure activities, the city offered many opportunities to pursue negotiations and consolidate connections. A year or two into her time there (after the birth of her remaining children), the Countess of Fernán Núñez, having built upon the formative experience of her time in Lisbon, possessed sufficient tools and skills to handle herself well, both at Versailles and in the wider social life of Paris. The fast-moving political events in France, however, meant that the Spanish ambassador was removed from his post on short notice. On 17 September 1791, he and his family left Paris—María was again pregnant—and began a period of self-exile in various European cities before finally returning to Madrid in 1794. Their first destination was Louvain, where they arrived on 4 October, having made various stops along the way, including the Prince of Condé's castle, which, in his travel journal, the Count called "a home fit for a king," and the country house of René-Louis de Girardin in Ermenonville, where they found "one of the first and loveliest English gardens in France, famous because on its island is buried Juan Jacobo Rousea."[54]

Having departed in haste, with the Revolution raging around them, the family left behind most of their possessions, including their books, at the Hôtel de Soyecourt. Before leaving, the Count gave M. de Souvigny, his agent in France, detailed instructions about

shipping the latter back to Spain. The Count left Souvigny expressly in charge of his library and asked him to draw up and send him a list of any books and pamphlets it contained relating to the Revolution.[55] However, this commission was not carried out immediately and the family's belongings ended up being confiscated by the Committee of Public Safety in August 1793.[56] The Count and Countess returned to Spain in late 1794, and soon afterwards, on 23 February 1795, Carlos died in Madrid, leaving a will that stated that his wife should have guardianship and care of their children and possessions.[57] It was the widowed María, therefore, who ultimately embarked on the process of negotiating for and recovering what remained, after public auction, of their assets in Paris, including their books and pamphlets.

The details of what was involved in reclaiming the family's economic, cultural, and symbolic capital can be found in the correspondence that the Countess maintained, in French, in 1796 with her administrator in France, Roberto Vauquelin, whom the late Count had appointed from Louvain.[58] Among that correspondence is a list of the first shipment, which required 72 chests, 14 of which contained books and papers.[59] Vauquelin not only listed in which chests the books would be traveling, he also sent the Countess two separate and detailed lists of "the books of his lordship the Count of Fernán Núñez" and "the books of her ladyship the Countess of Fernán Núñez."[60] If we compare the two lists with an earlier surviving catalog of their library (from around 1778), everything seems to point to the fact that this was a collection built up during the couple's years in Portugal and France. We know they had a library in their Lisbon home and that the Count purchased books while resident there, but we do not know how many volumes he bought nor what they were. It is clear, however, that the books, like their owners, were well traveled: some moved from Madrid to Lisbon; others from Paris to Lisbon—these were volumes acquired with the help of the Duke of the Infantado and the botanist Antonio

José Cavanilles, a friend of the Duke's and tutor to his children; quite a few went from Lisbon to Madrid; and others from Madrid to Paris, where the couple established their "Parisian library," to which they undoubtedly added during their years in the city.[61]

Beyond the issues relating to legal possession, or to the agency involved in the acts of buying, collecting, and reading, the distinction that Vauquelin drew between "the books of his lordship" and those "of her ladyship" would seem to suggest that husband and wife had separate collections that occupied different spaces within the family home, although each could and did access the other's books. The Count's Paris library was made up of 559 printed books and 20 manuscripts distributed across 1,349 volumes, while the Countess's consisted of 96 printed books across 323 volumes.[62] French is the predominant language in the Countess's library, which reveals a taste for and interest in French *belles lettres*, including books on manners, sentimental and educational novels, poetry, science, and satirical literature, including works of *libertinage érudit* and others banned in Spain by the Inquisition. It is a modern collection that, despite the presence of a few books on religious themes (ten at most, all of them in Spanish), is fundamentally secular in nature.[63] All 1,672 volumes of the couple's libraries were finally transported from Paris to Madrid in 1796, thanks to the Countess's efforts.

What we know of the Paris ambassadorship enables us, therefore, to paint a portrait of a woman who had her own library and was the hostess of her own circle. The letters she wrote to her administrator reveal a widow actively involved in reclaiming the belongings, including books, that she and her late husband had had to abandon when they left the embassy.

The Transnational and Transgenerational Mediation of a Female Aristocrat

By dint of their work, training, and mobility, travelers, ambassadors, scientists, writers,

explorers, merchants, missionaries, soldiers, and bureaucrats all played key roles as brokers and go-betweens. In recent years, gender studies have helped bring a new balance to this narrative through an analysis of the transnational lives of the women who belonged to the same social and intellectual circles as these male go-betweens: princesses and their entourages, nuns, ambassadresses, and female writers, translators, and travelers.

There was a cosmopolitan dimension to the aristocratic way of life that encouraged a crossing of boundaries. Travel; diplomacy; a knowledge of other languages (French, at least, as the *lingua franca*); access to the latest literary, scientific, philosophical, and political thinking from other places; a set of shared aesthetic ideas; and a command of court manners and protocol—all of these were integral parts of an aristocratic culture built and maintained through transnational connections, networks, and family ties. María, Countess of Fernán Núñez moved among the political and cultural elite traveling with her husband across geographical, linguistic, and cultural borders. Her life and agency developed within a sociocultural world in which subjects negotiated their own identities in the space between the self and the other, learning to understand other cultures, ideas, and customs, to be receptive to new ideas and experiences, and to adapt easily to new circumstances (a skill particularly necessary for ambassadors), while not losing sight of their origins. The Countess gained first-hand knowledge of the manners and customs of the Portuguese and French nobility. She dealt with other ambassadors and ambassadresses and came into contact with aristocrats and leading intellectuals who were members of salons, transnational networks, and literary and scientific academies. She was invited to balls; attended the theater, opera, and receptions, both alone and with her husband; and hosted gatherings in their home. She also had at her disposal a secular modern library enabling her to keep abreast of the latest scientific, literary, philosophical, and moral writings, which she could then draw upon in conversation.

Unlike some other figures of the time, the Countess left no private documents that would allow us access to what she thought or how she dealt with her cultural encounters.[64] The study of diplomatic practices and travel in the early modern period draws primarily on contemporary journals and letters. María's husband kept a record of all his travels (not only those associated with his diplomatic postings, but also those relating to his earlier profession as a soldier and the Grand Tour-style journeys he undertook for educational purposes) in a handwritten journal dedicated to his children.[65] We have nothing, however, from the Countess concerning her own travels, her life in Lisbon or Paris, or the peripatetic years before the family's return to Spain. There are no letters like those written by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu during her years as the British ambassadress consort to the Ottoman Empire (1717–18), which circulated among select small groups of readers. Nor are there any diaries, such as those kept by Elizabeth Vassall Fox, Baroness Holland, regarding her European travels between 1791 and 1811. There are not even any of the shorter, more fragmentary texts that have survived from earlier periods, which were written by ambassadors' wives while en route to or from their husbands. For example, Lady Anne Fanshawe, wife of the English ambassador to Spain (1664–66), wrote about the travel associated with their diplomatic postings in the memoirs dedicated to her children that she compiled at the end of her life. In a different format, we also have the *Tagzettel* [daily notes] that Johanna Theresia Harrach sent to her husband, the Imperial ambassador to Spain, during her journey with her children from Madrid to Vienna in 1676, which are very different in tone from the travel journal kept by the ambassador.[66] Nor do we have any articles, such as those written and published in the Spanish press in 1797 for the use and benefit of her country by María Agustina Romana de Siles y Cuenca, who accompanied her husband as ambassadress consort to diplomatic postings in Stockholm, The Hague, and London.[67] The profile of the Countess of Fernán Núñez also

differs from that of other polyglot, cultured aristocratic female travelers who, unlike the Countess, maintained epistolary exchanges and acted as writers, translators, and patrons of the arts. One such noble was the fourth Marchioness of Alorna, consort of the Portuguese ambassador to the Habsburg Empire; another was Irene de Navia y Bellet, Marchioness of Grimaldo (1726–86), an ambassador's daughter; and a third was the Marchioness of Osuna (1752–1834), patroness of artists, musicians, and writers, who presided over a famous salon in Madrid and traveled to Paris as ambassadress consort—the latter, as well as writing letters, also kept a travel journal which, sadly, has not survived.

Because of this lack of documentary evidence, the Countess of Fernán Núñez has rather sunk into historiographic neglect. Here, by using indirect and scattered references—from the official reports of the Paris police, mentions of her by third parties in a variety of writings (her husband's letters and journals; the diaries of the ambassadors she met, such as the Marquis of Bombelles; and the correspondence of people who moved in the same circles, such as the Countess of Vimieiro), and the letters she herself wrote to her administrator in Paris after the Count's death—it has been possible to reconstruct María's contribution to the Spanish ambassadorial couple's sociability during their postings and to characterize her involvement in the business of diplomacy. Whether with her husband or alone, the Countess paid visits to other ambassadors' wives and the ladies at court and participated in the social and cultural life of the cities and courts in which she lived. With the less demanding Lisbon acting as her "school," this woman from the provincial periphery mastered the tools and resources that enabled her to navigate court and aristocratic sociability with ease and to help her husband create the reputation and the network of contacts they both needed in order to successfully fulfill their political and cultural role. As time went on, she also handled life in Paris independently and with

composure: she hosted her own circle and was clearly involved in the diplomatic dealings that went on in its informal, but no less political, spaces.

By birth, training, and experience, many aristocrats played leading roles in cultural transfer. The surviving sources relating to the Count make it easier to clearly identify his role as a cultural mediator during his ambassadorial postings: he facilitated the movement of books, ideas, artistic trends, works of art, other artifacts, and raw materials. There is no evidence regarding his wife's agency when it comes to buying books or acquiring works of art during these years. From that point of view, María becomes rather more visible after her husband's death, when she assumed the crucial role of cultural and transgenerational mediator by negotiating the return of the possessions the family had to leave behind in Paris. In arranging the transport of the 1,672 volumes that had graced their Parisian bookshelves, the Countess made a significant contribution to the establishment of the Fernán Núñez library. The role she played as mediator was both evident and critical, not so much in acquiring the books in the first place, but rather in rescuing and reuniting a collection of great value to her descendants. Unquestionably a substantial economic, cultural, and symbolic legacy, the Count's and Countess's Paris libraries had been amassed over the course of a shared life of travel and diplomacy and could now be passed on to the next generation, thanks to María's skill in mediation as she continued the teamwork that she had begun with her late husband.

This research has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Horizon 2020 programme (CIRGEN, ERC Advanced Grant, Grant Agreement No. 787015).

[1] "Plusieurs ministres estrangers ont été à l'opèra ensuit chez Madame l'ambassadrisse d'Espagne òu il y avait cercle." Archive du Ministère des Affaires Étrangères (subsequent citations will be made as AMAE), contrôle des étrangers, 1771–1940, 1 January 1789, Book 79, 12v.

[2] Janie Cole, "Cultural Clientelism and Brokerage Networks in Early Modern Florence and Rome: New Correspondence between the Barberini and Michelangelo Buonarroti the Younger," *Renaissance Quarterly*, 60, no. 3 (2007), 748. For a revision of the go-between concept in the history of science, see Kapil Raj, "Go-Betweens, Travelers, and Cultural Translators," in *A Companion to the History of Science*, ed. Bernard Lightman (Oxford: Blackwell, 2016), 39–57.

[3] Willem Frijhaoff, "Cosmopolitisme," in *Le monde des Lumières*, ed. Vincenzo Ferrone and Daniel Roche (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 31–40; Vanda Anastácio, "Women Writers in an International Context: Was the Marchioness of Alorna (1750–1839) Cosmopolitan?," in *Cosmopolitanism in the Portuguese-Speaking World*, ed. Francisco Bethencourt (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 132–43.

[4] Verschaffel, et al., "Towards a Multipolar Model of Cultural Mediators within Multicultural Spaces: Cultural Mediators in Belgium, 1830–1945," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire*, 92, no. 4 (2014), 1257.

[5] Will, memoirs, and military codicil of the sixth Count of Fernán Núñez, Archivo Histórico Nacional, Sección Nobleza (subsequent citations will be made as AHN-SN), Fernán Núñez, C. 491, D. 5 (clause 41).

[6] Before his marriage to María, the Count fathered two illegitimate children with Italian opera singer Gertrudis Macucci: Ángel (born 1771) and Camilo (born 1772), both of whom he supported without publicly acknowledging them as his. It was his dying wish that his wife should continue to protect them. Ángel pursued a military career, while

Camilo went into the diplomatic service. The Mutiny of Aranjuez (17–19 March 1808) brought about the downfall of prime minister Manuel Godoy and the abdication of King Carlos IV in favor of his son, Fernando VII. The *Dos de Mayo* Uprising (2 May 1808) was a popular revolt against the French military occupation of northern Spain and marked the start of the Spanish War of Independence (1808–14). Together, these events have been seen as the beginning of the Spanish Revolution.

[7] Antonio Juan Calvo Maturana, "'Dios nos libre de más revoluciones': el Motín de Aranjuez y el Dos de Mayo vistos por la condesa viuda de Fernán Núñez," *Pasado y memoria: Revista de historia contemporánea* 10 (2011), 169.

[8] *Translators, Interpreters, Mediators: Women Writers, 1700–1900*, ed. Gillian Dow (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007); *Early Modern Women and Transnational Communities of Letters*, ed. Julie D. Campbell and Ann R. Larsen (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009); *Readers, Writers, Salonnières: Female Networks in Europe, 1700–1900*, ed. Hilary Brown and Gillian Dow (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011); "Enlightened Female Networks: Gendered Ways of Producing Knowledge (1760–1840)," ed. Anna Maerker, Elena Serrano and Simon Werrett, special issue of *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* 76, no. 4 (2022).

[9] See "Voyageuses," ed. Rebecca Rogers and Françoise Thébaud, special issue of *Clio: Histoires, femmes, sociétés* 28 (2008); *British Women Travellers: Empire and Beyond, 1770–1870*, ed. Sutapa Dutta (New York: Routledge, 2019), among others.

[10] See Fanny Cosandey, "De lance en quenouille: La place de la reine dans l'État moderne (XIVe–XVIIe siècles)," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 52, no. 4 (1997), 799–820; Cosandey, *La reine de France, symbole et pouvoir* (Paris: Gallimard, 2000); Cosandey, "Puissance maternelle et pouvoir politique: La régence des reines mères," *Clio: Histoire, femmes et sociétés* 21 (2005), https://journals. openedition.org/clio/1447; *Queenship in Britain, 1660–1837: Royal Patronage, Court Culture, and Dynastic Politics*, ed. Clarissa

Campbell Orr (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); *Queenship in Europe, 1660–1815: The Role of the Consort*, ed. Clarissa Campbell Orr (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); *The Rule of Women in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anne J. Cruz and Mihoko Suzuki (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); *Forgotten Queens in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: Political Agency, Myth-Making, and Patronage*, ed. Valerie Schutte and Estelle Paranque (London: Routledge, 2019). On Spanish queens specifically, see *La Reina Isabel y las reinas de España: realidad, modelos e imágenes historiográficas*, ed. María Victoria López-Cordón and Gloria Franco, vol. 1 (Madrid: Fundación Española de Historia Moderna, 2005), *and Queenship and Political Power in Medieval and Early Modern Spain*, ed. Theresa Earenfight (Aldershot: Ashgate 2005). The widespread interest in this field of study has resulted in the appearance of Palgrave Macmillan's "Queenship and Power" series, which has produced more than 60 titles since 2003.

[11] *Le Donne Medici nel Sistema Europeo delle Corti, XVI–XVIII secolo*, ed. Giulia Calvi and Riccardo Spinelli, 2 vols. (Florence: Edizioni Polistampa, 2008), xviii. According to the editors, this two-volume work offers the first complete history of a dynasty from the perspective of its female members.

[12] *Moving Elites: Women and Cultural Transfers in the European Court System*, ed. Giulia Calvi and Isabelle Chabot (Badia Fiesolana: European University Institute, 2010), 1. The transnational lives and cultural and political significance of female members of the Spanish royal family have also been the subject of study. See *Early Modern Habsburg Women: Transnational Contexts, Cultural Conflicts, Dynastic Continuities*, ed. Anne J. Cruz and María Gallistampino (Farnham: Ashgate, 2013).

[13] See Bartolomé Yun Casalilla, "Aristocratic Women across Borders, Cultural Transfers, and Something More. Why Should We Care?," in *Early Modern Dynastic Marriages and*

Cultural Transfer, ed. Joan-Lluís Palos and Magdalena S. Sánchez (London: Routledge, 2016), 237–57.

[14] *Queens Consort, Cultural Transfer and European Politics*, ed. Helen Watanabe-O'Kellley and Adam Morton (London: Routledge, 2016), 3–4.

[15] Duindam, "The Politics of Female Households: Afterthoughts," in *The Politics of Female Households: Ladies-in-Waiting across Early Modern Europe*, ed. Nadine Akkerman and Brigit Houben (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 367, 370.

[16] John Watkins, "Towards a New Diplomatic History of Medieval and Early Modern Europe," *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 38, no. 1 (2008), 1–14.

[17] "Cross-Confessional Diplomacy and Diplomatic Intermediaries in the Early Modern Mediterranean," ed. Maartje van Gelder and Tijana Krstić, special issue of *Journal of Early Modern History* 19, no. 2–3 (2015); *Global Gifts: The Material Culture of Diplomacy in Early Modern Eurasia*, ed. Zoltán Biedermann, Anne Gerritsen, and Giorgio Riello (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); "Diplomacia y Embajadas en la Edad Moderna: de lo Global a lo Cotidiano," ed. Laura Oliván Santaliestra, special issue of *Chronica Nova* 44 (2018).

[18] *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500*, ed. Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James (New York: Routledge, 2016). See also *Gender and Diplomacy: Women and Men in European and Ottoman Embassies from the 15th to the 18th Century*, ed. Roberta Anderson, Laura Oliván Santaliestra, and Suna Suner (Vienna: Hollitzer Verlag, 2021).

[19] *Gender and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1400–1800*, ed. James Daybell and Svante Norrhem (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 3–24; Jennifer Mori, *The Culture of Diplomacy: Britain in Europe, c. 1750–1830* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011); Laura Oliván Santaliestra, "Gender, Work and Diplomacy in Baroque Spain: The

Ambassadorial Couples of the Holy Roman Empire as Arbeitspaare," *Gender & History* 29, no. 2 (2017), 423–45; Florian Kühnel, "'Minister-like cleverness, understanding, and influence of affairs': Ambassadresses in Everyday Business and Courtly Ceremonies at the Turn of the Eighteenth Century," in *Practices of Diplomacy in the Early Modern World, c. 1410–1800*, ed. Tracey A. Sowerby and Jan Hennings (London: Routledge, 2017), 130–42.

[20] Moser, *L'ambassadrice et ses droits* (Berlin: Étienne de Bourdeaux, 1752), 8.

[21] Laura Oliván Santaliestra, "Por una historia diplomática de las mujeres en la Edad Moderna," in *Autoridad, poder e influencia: Mujeres que hacen historia*, ed. Henar Gellego Franco and María del Carmen Herrero (Barcelona: Icaria, 2017), 70. On the equivalent word and its meanings in France, see Loïc Bienassis, "Ambassadrice," in *Dictionnaire des femmes des Lumières*, ed. Huguette Krief and Valérie André, 2 vols. (Paris: Honoré Champion, 2015), 1:51–57.

[22] Gemma Allen, "The Rise of the Ambassadress: English Ambassadorial Wives and Early Modern Diplomatic Culture," *Historical Journal*, 62, no. 3 (2019), 617–38.

[23] Journey to Galicia, AHN-SN, FN, C. 2033, D. 5 (fol. 23–24). The visit took place between late April and early May 1777.

[24] Prince Emanuel was the son of Nikolaus Leopold of Salm-Salm, first Duke of Hoogstraten. His sister, Maria Ana, married the twelfth Duke of the Infantado, nephew of the sixth Count of Fernán Núñez. Prince Emanuel was an infantry colonel in the regiment of Brabant. For more on him, see Archivo Histórico Nacional, OM-CABALLEROS_MONTESA, Exp.421. For more on the friendship between the two noblemen, see Alfredo Morel Fatio, *Etudes sur l'Espagne* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1906), 26ff.

[25] Alfredo Morel Fatio and Antonio Paz y Meliá, "Biografía del conde de Fernán Núñez,"

in *Vida de Carlos III*, 2 vols. (Madrid: Fundación Universitaria Española, 1988), 2:241.

[26] The four children born in Lisbon were Carlos (1779), José (1780), Escolástica (1783), and Francisco (1786).

[27] Morel Fatio and Paz y Meliá, "Biografía," 2:245 (Madrid, 23 September 1778).

[28] Morel Fatio and Paz y Meliá, "Biografía," 2:246.

[29] Morel Fatio and Paz y Meliá, "Biografía," 2:251.

[30] Morel Fatio and Paz y Meliá, "Biografía," 2:247 (Lisbon, 15 March 1779).

[31] AHN-SN, Fernán Núñez, C. 1676, D. 7.

[32] Morel Fatio and Paz y Meliá, "Biografía," 2:245–49 (Lisbon, 15 March 1779). Nuno Gonçalo Monteiro and Fernando Dores Costa, *D. João Carlos de Bragança, 2º Duque de Lafões, Uma vida singular no século das Luzes* (Lisbon: Inapa, 2006). For more on Portuguese connections with the Royal Society of London, see Ana Cristina Araújo, *A Cultura das Luzes em Portugal* (Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 2003).

[33] Journey from Lisbon to Madrid, 9 April 1787, AHN-SN, FN, C. 2033, D. 10, fol. 12–13.

[34] Maria Alexandre Lousada, "Sociabilidades mundanas em Lisboa. Partidas e Assembleias, c. 1760–1834," *Penelope* 19–20 (1998), 133.

[35] Costigan, *Sketches of Society and Manners in Portugal: In a Series of Letters from Arthur William Costigan, Esq., late a captain of the Irish Brigade in the service of Spain, to his brother in London*, 2 vols. (London: T. Vernor, 1787); Beckford, *Italy: with sketches of Spain and Portugal* (London: R. Bentley, 1834); Marquis de Bombelles, *Journal d'un ambassadeur de France au Portugal, 1786–1788* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979). On the conflicting accounts of sociability at the court of Lisbon, see Lousada, "Sociabilidades mundanas," and Maria Antonia Lopes, *Mulheres, espaço e sociabilidades: A transformação dos papéis femininos em Portugal à luz de*

fontes literárias (segunda metade do século XVIII) (Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 1989).

[36] On *assembleias* see Lousada, "Sociabilidades mundanas"; Lopes, *Mulheres, espaço e sociabilidades*; Maria de Lurdes Lima dos Santos, *Intelectuais Portugueses na Primeira metade de Oitocentos* (Lisbon: Presença, 1988); Vanda Anastácio, "Cherchez la femme (À propos d'une forme de sociabilité littéraire à Lisbonne à la fin du XVIIIème siècle)," *Arquivos do Centro Cultural Portugues* 49 (2005), 93–101; and Anastácio, "Women and Literary Sociability in Eighteenth-Century Lisbon," in *Women Writing Back / Writing Women Back*, ed. Anke Gilleir, Alicia Montoya, and Suzan van Dijk (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 93–111.

[37] Marquis de Bombelles, *Journal d'un ambassadeur*, 211–12.

[38] AHN-SN, Fernán Núñez, C. 1676, D. 7; the portrait is one of the items listed in the inventory of their library.

[39] Countess Thun's *Idéa de hum elogio histórico de Maria Theresa Archiduqueza de Austria … escrita em francez por M. M***** was published in Lisbon by the Officina of Francisco Luiz Ameno in 1781. Marie-Caroline Murray's original had been published earlier that year in Brussels by J. Van den Berghen as *Essai d'un éloge historique de Marie-Thérèse, archiduchesse d'Autriche, impératrice-douairière … par M. M*****. For more on the life of the Countess, see Raquel Bello and Elias Torres, "Teresa de Mello Breyner, Countess of Vimieiro (1739–1798?)," in *Women, Enlightenment, and Catholicism: A Transnational Biographical History*, ed. Ulrich L. Lehner (London: Routledge, 2018), 87–97. The Countess de Vimieiro's letters to Leonor de Almeida can be found in Raquel Bello Vázquez, *Uma certa ambiçaõ de gloria: Trajectória, redes e estratégias de Teresa de Mello Breyner nos campos intelectual e do poder em Portugal (1770–1798)* (Ph.D. dissertation, Universidad Santiago de Compostela, 2005), Appendix.

[40] Raquel Bello Vázquez, "Sociabilidade e aristocracia em Portugal no último quartel do

século XVIII," in *A questão social no novo milénio* (Coimbra: Faculdade de Economia da Universidade de Coimbra, Centro de Estudos Sociais, 2004), 1–12.

[41] Mello Breyner, *Osmia: Tragedia portuguesa en cinco actos, premiada por la Academia Real de las Ciencias de Lisboa, y traducida al castellano por I. M. R.L.* (Madrid, 1798).

[42] AHN-SN, Fernán Núñez, C. 787, D. 4. José Antonio Vigara Zafra, "La embajada del VI conde de Fernán Núñez en Lisboa (1778–1787): Un ejemplo de promoción social a través de la diplomacia," in *Embajadores culturales: Transferencias y lealtades de la diplomacia española en la Edad Moderna*, ed. Diana Carrió-Invernizzi (Madrid: UNED, 2016), 244.

[43] Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service, Wrest Park (Lucas) Manuscripts, L 30/15/54–L 30/16/16.

[44] Nicolás Bas, "Juan Bautista Muñoz (1745–1799): un ilustrado valenciano, autor de la "Historia del nuevo mundo" y fundador del Archivo General de Indias," *Estudis: Revista de historia moderna* 26 (2000), 245–62, especially 254; *El cosmógrafo e historiador Juan Bautista Muñoz (1745–1799)* (Valencia: Universitat de València, 2002), 128–29; Leon Bourdon, "Relations 'Littéraires' portugaises de Juan Bautista Muñoz (1784–1799)," *Arquivos* 8 (1975), 405–536.

[45] The paintings date from some time between 1780, when Hickey arrived in Lisbon, and 1783, when they appear in the family's inventory of assets. Photographs of these paintings can be found at the Fototeca del Instituto del Patrimonio Cultural de España [Photo Library of the Spanish Cultural Heritage Institute], http://catalogos. mecd.es/IPCE/cgi-ipce/ipcefototeca?TITN=320142. Don Carlos Guitiérrez de los Ríos, Archivo Moreno, 06173_B, IPCE, Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte; and Doña María de la Escalvitud, condesa de Fernán Núñez, Archivo Moreno, 06174_B, IPCE, Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte.

[46] AHN-SN, FN, C. 2033, D. 2/1, fol. 31–32.

[47] AHN-SN, FN, C. 2033, D. 2/1, fol. 38.

[48] AHN-SN, FN, C. 2033, D. 2/1, fol. 39–41.

[49] After returning to Madrid and before traveling to Paris, the Countess of Fernán Núñez was admitted as a member of the Junta de Damas de Honor y Mérito, the oldest secular philanthropic association in Spain. See *Society, Women, and Enlightened Charity in Spain: The Junta de Damas de Honor y Mérito, 1787–1823,* ed. Catherine M. Jaffe and Elisa Martín Valdepeñas Yagüe (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2022).

[50] AHN-SN, FN, C. 2033, D.10, fol. 113.

[51] AMAE, contrôle des étrangers, 1771–1940. See too Mónica Bolufer Peruga, "Vivir la civilidad: Diplomacia y cortesía en la experiencia de una pareja aristocrática," in *Arte y artificio de la vida en común. Los modelos de comportamiento y sus tensiones en el siglo de la Luces* (Madrid: Marcial Pons, 2019), 252–76.

[52] "A circle was held at the home of Madame the ambassadress of Spain, at which most members of the diplomatic corps were present," 6 February 1791 ["Il y a eu cercle chez Mme l'ambassatrice d'Espagne, le pluspart des membres du corps diplomatiques s'y sont trouvés"]; "They spent the evening at the home of Madame the ambassadress of Spain," 20 and 27 March 1791 ["ont passé la soirée chez Mme l'ambassatrice d'Espagne"].

[53] The Countess was out "with her company" on 11 March 1791 ["avec sa société"]. There are similar reports from 13 February, 20 February, 24 April, 15 May, 22 May, 19 June, 26 June, 7 July, 14 July, 17 July, 21 August, and 8 September 1789. On French sociability, see Antoine Lilti, *Le Monde des salons: Sociabilité et mondanité à Paris au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Fayard, 2005).

[54] Paris-Louvain travel journal (1791), AHN-SN, FN, C. 2033, D. 13.

[55] AHN-SN, FN, C. 1442, D. 1.

[56] Archives du Département des Affaires Étrangères, Paris, Correspondance politique, Espagne, vols. 636 and 637.

[57] The Count's death was announced in the Gaceta de Madrid on Tuesday, 24 March 1795, 328–29. AHN-SN, FN, C. 964, D. 12. AHN-SN, FN, C. 491, D.5 (clause 41). On the guardianship, see also AHN-SN, FN, C. 177, D. 48 and C. 2150, D. 2. Of their nine children, only six were still alive in 1795: Carlos, José, Escolástica, Francisco, Luis, and Bruna.

[58] The Countess negotiated not only with Vauquelin, but also with the representatives she sent to deal with him, agreeing which items (including furniture and carriages) were to be shipped to Spain and which were to be sold because of their condition. Her letters, written between May and July 1796, can be consulted at AHN-SN, FN, C. 1355, D. 13 and D. 19.

[59] AHN-SN, Fernán Núñez, C. 1355, D. 19–33.

[60] "Les livres du M. le Comte de Fernán Núñez" and "les livres de Madame la Comtesse De Fernán Núñez."

[61] Nicolás Bas Martín, "A. J. Cavanilles en París (1777–1789): Un embajador cultural en la Europa del siglo XVIII," *Cuadernos de Geografía* 62 (1997), 223–24. Cavanilles was closely associated with various learned Spanish figures, including Juan Bautista Muñoz, who, as we have already seen, had his own connection with the Count. Cavanilles supplied books and journals to many noblemen and intellectuals, including the Count (231).

[62] The list of the Countess's books can be consulted at AHN-SN, FN, C. 1355, D. 19–34, and that of the Count's at AHN–SN, FN, C. 1355, D. 19–35.

[63] For an analysis of the Fernán Núñez library and the two lists of books, see my "Libros y vidas que viajan: género y mediación cultural en la biblioteca de los VI condes de

Fernán Núñez," *Arenal: Revista de Historia de las Mujeres* 29, no. 2 (2022): 447–68.

[64] On the role of writing, particularly letter-writing, in the construction of subjective experience, see Dena Goodman. *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009).

[65] See my "Autobiografía y memoria en el diario de viajes del VI conde de Fernán Núñez," *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma: Serie IV, Historia Moderna* 26 (2016), 65–84.

[66] Laura Oliván, "Idas y vueltas de un matrimonio de embajadores: Memoria, identidad y género en los relatos de viaje de Fernando Bonaventura y Johanna Theresia Harrach (1673–1677)," *Espacio, Tiempo y Forma: Serie IV, Historia Moderna*, 26 (2016), 39–64.

[67] Siles y Cuenta published in 1797 in the *Semanario de Agricultura y Artes destinado a los Párrocos* under the heading "Extracto de carta de una señora Española, cuyas observaciones en Suecia y en su viaje desde aquel país La Haya, nosh an parecido dignas de publicarse" [Excerpts of letters from a Spanish lady, whose observations in Sweden and on her journey from that country to The Hague we thought worthy of publication]." See Mónica Bolufer Peruga, "'Ver desde su retiro la extensión del mundo': La experiencia y el relato de viajes," in *El siglo XVIII en femenino*, ed. Manuel García Hurtado (Madrid: Síntesis, 2016), 224–25.