Addressing the conference theme “Remapping Routes and Spaces,” our session draws attention to the networks royal and aristocratic women in Spain created within their families, throughout the Habsburg Empire, and in foreign courts from the sixteenth to the end of the seventeenth century. Because these powerful and well-educated women lived in different European courts and used multiple languages, it often takes the combined expertise of multiple scholars with training in several languages, paleography skills, and archival access to uncover their lives and that of their families. The organizers attempt to recreate the networks early modern royal and aristocratic women used in order to study them. We wish to invite conference participants to be part of a third set of networks by bringing their own scholarly expertise to place the experiences of the women in an even larger context.

The session relates to the community plenary as we identify these women’s family, kinship, political, and religious networks through a variety of documents, including state papers, diplomatic correspondence, letters, and a variety of legal documents. The session also relates to the exchange plenary since these communities were formed and maintained through a dynamic exchange of art objects, letters, gift-giving, and patronage, all of which helped these women cement and extend their sphere of influence. Whether they travelled or stayed behind, movement was implied one way or another. Thus, these communities crossed temporal boundaries, were multilingual, and existed in gendered and political spaces. We are part of these exchanges also, as we go to the archives, decipher the multiple layers of meanings behind their portraits, study the art they commissioned, and identify their political, economic, social, and cultural impacts.

Grace Coolidge (Grand Valley State University) works on the social and economic power of Spanish noblewomen from the fifteenth to the seventeenth century, focusing on the practice of guardianships, most of them held by women. Working with legal records such as guardianship agreements, wills, marriage contracts, and lawsuits, she explores the paradox of a patriarchal society that depended heavily on women for the transfer of economic and political power between generations. Vanessa de Cruz (Fundación Carlos de Amberes) studies the personal correspondence of noble and royal women, who either served the Habsburg court or lived in the Royal Convent of the Descalzas Reales in Madrid, including for example, Margarita de Cardona (1535?-1609) and her daughters, and Sor Ana Dorotea of Austria (1611/12-1694), the illegitimate daughter of Emperor Rudolph II. Using the so-called Pragmáticas de Cortesías (Royal Regulation of forms of address), epistolary manuals, Golden Age literature, and hundreds of letters in Spanish, Italian, Austrian, and Czech archives, she ascertains aristocratic and royal women’s social and political status alongside their male counterparts. Silvia Mitchell (University of Miami) investigates the regency of Mariana of Austria (1634-1696) during the minority of King Carlos II of Spain (r. 1665-1700). Mariana’s political networks left a hefty documentary trail, including state
papers, and personal and diplomatic correspondence in Spanish, German, and Austrian archives. The case of this important female ruler illustrates the need for scholarly collaboration, and Mitchell is working with Laura Olivan (Universidad de Granada) to make some of Mariana’s correspondence (originally written in Spanish and a German dialect) available to others.

Based on our own studies, we would like to assert that these women could and often did muster significant authority. They influenced their families, states, and Empires with their significant dynastic, social, and economic capital and through their transnational and intergenerational networks. When combined, our work challenges traditional notions of patriarchy. At least in the Spanish case, the law, the political culture of the court, and the aristocracy (which comprised a larger segment of the population in Spain than in other polities) allowed women to share economic and political power, and social prestige with their male counterparts.

1. **Institutionalization of Female Authority**

*Guardianship, by Grace E. Coolidge*

Early modern Spanish women were often guardians of their children, a position which carried similar responsibilities to those of royal regents although on a smaller scale. Between 1350 and 1750, more than eighty percent of Spanish noblemen chose their wives to be the guardians of their children.

My study of guardianship in early modern Spain used 145 noble wills from nine noble titles in the Osuna Collection in the Archivo Histórico Nacional, Sección Nobleza, in Toledo, Spain. Thirty-six of the testators were female, and 40 men did not assign guardians. Out of the remaining 60 wills in which a nobleman assigned a guardian between 1383 and 1751, 46 fathers assigned female guardians (their wives or their mothers), and two men assigned their wives as co-guardians. Since these guardianships did not always take place, I also studied 123 guardianships that did actually take place, using formal guardianship agreements, as well other relevant documentation. Eighty-two of these guardians were

The law code that most specifically made female guardianship possible was the medieval Spanish code *Las Siete Partidas*. While early modern Spain followed a complicated collection of laws, *Las Siete Partidas* most clearly spells out the practices that the nobility used when appointing female guardians. The following clause is from Robert I. Burns, S. J. (ed.), Samuel Parsons Scott (trans.), *Las Siete Partidas*, vol. 5, *Underworlds: The Dead, the Criminal, and the Marginalized* (Philadelphia, 2001), 1285. Partida Six, Title Sixteen, Law IV:

How Guardians of Minors and Their Property Can Be Appointed

A person appointed the guardian of minors should be neither dumb, deaf, nor destitute of understanding, nor a spendthrift of his property, nor of bad morals. The party should be over twenty-five years of age, a man and not a woman, except where their mother or grandmother has been appointed the guardian of said minor; for, in this case, if such a woman is appointed, and promises in the hands of the king, or of the judge of the district where the minors are, that so long as she has charge of said minor she will not marry, and also states that she waives the defense which the law permits to women not to have the power to bind themselves for others; then she can be granted the guardianship of her children or grandchildren, as aforesaid. The reason why we forbid her to marry while she has charge of said children is because, on account of the great affection which she may bear to the new husband whom she has taken, she will not properly care for the persons of her children, or will do something which will result in their serious injury. Moreover, if she does not waive the aforesaid defense, men might hesitate to transact business, or enter into any contract, with her, even where this is necessary on account of the guardianship, or for the advantage and benefit of the property belonging to the children. A guardian should be appointed by the direction of a father or grandfather; or by the provision of the law, as, for instance, on account of relationship, or by order of the court, as we stated above.

In addition to the law about guardians, many noblemen left clauses in their wills specifically appointing their wives as guardians. The language used in these clauses is highly formulaic and closely resembles that of Philip IV as he appointed his wife guardian of their son and regent of his kingdom (see below). This language is also revealing, as noblemen (and the king himself) clearly stated why they wanted their wives as guardians. The following selections are clauses from sixteenth and seventeenth-century wills, all of which are taken from the Osuna collection in Sección Nobleza of the Archivo Histórico Nacional in Toledo.

Clauses from the will of Diego Hurtado de Mendoza, heir to the duke of Infantado (1559), appointing his wife, María de Mendoza, the marquise of Cenete, guardian of his minor children. Transcribed and translated by Grace E. Coolidge. Archivo Histórico Nacional,
I declare the marquise, their mother, as tutora and curadora of my sons and daughters because . . . they and their estate will be better governed by her and under her care and attention as complies with their goods and their honor, and so I charge and command each and every one of them under the pain of God’s curse and my curse that in everything, at every time, and in every place, they demonstrate the submission and obedience that she deserves and that they owe her and that she each day deserves more.

Clauses from the will of Ruy Gomez de Silva y Mendoza, the prince of Mérito (1596), appointing his wife, Ana de Portugal y Borja, guardian of his minor children. Translated by Grace E. Coolidge. Archivo Histórico Nacional, Sección Nobleza, Toledo, Spain. (AHN, Nobleza, Osuna, legajo 2025, no. 13.2)

To the duchess my wife, I ask and plead that in the care and governance of our children, she show the love that she has always given me, looking on them as beloved tokens of our love, directing them towards virtue and complying with the obligations of their birth.

For the great satisfaction I have in the Christianity, example and good governance of the duchess my wife, I declare and name her as guardian and administrator of the persons and goods of our children, and I wish her to have the same hand and power in everything concerning them that I myself would have; and I ask that on all occasions she consult and follow the advice of my lady Margarita, her mother, and of the lords the duke of Infantado and the duke of Medina Sidonia, my brother-in-law, and Rodrigo Vazques Arze, President of the Royal Council of Castile, who knows the many reasons for my confidence and value of his friendship and favor.

Codicil from the will of Ruy Gomez de Silva y Mendoza, the prince of Mérito and duke of Pastrana (1626), son of the prince in the 1596 document, appointing his wife, Leonor de Guzmán, guardian of his minor children. Transcribed and translated by Grace E. Coolidge. Archivo Histórico Nacional, Sección Nobleza, Toledo, Spain. (AHN, Nobleza, legajo 2025, no. 15.2)
In the presence of the scribe, Ruy Gomez de Silva y Mendoza, Prince of Melito and duke of Pastrana “... named her Excellency the princess, his cousin and wife, lady Leonor de Guzman, for tutora and curadora of the persons and goods of don Rodrigo de Silva, his first-born son and the eldest of his brothers and sisters, and as governor and administrator of his estates, revoking the required bond as stated in the said clause, and now he returns anew and names her tutora and curadora of the persons and goods of the said [younger] children and governor and administrator of the their estates with the revocation of bonds because of the great satisfaction he has in the said lady princess because of her Christianity, honesty, and punctuality, and the great love she has for her children and the attention she will give to increasing and augmenting the estates.

Regency as Guardianship, by Silvia Z. Mitchell

Mariana of Austria ruled the Spanish monarchy during the minority of her son, Carlos II of Spain, as many royal women during the early modern period. Her regency was based on well-established Iberian and Habsburg political traditions. It was also perfectly in line with the obvious preference among the aristocracy to choose mothers as the guardians of heirs and heiresses. The following clauses reveal the similarities between Mariana’s regency with that of guardianships held by Spanish noblewomen. Like her aristocratic counterparts, Mariana’s guardianship included the titles of “tutor and curator.” She also possessed the title of “governor,” denoting the political aspect of her guardianship. The following clauses from Philip IV’s Testament provided the legal framework for Mariana of Austria’s regency. The original Spanish text can be found in Testamento de Felipe IV. Edicion facsímil, Antonio Domínguez Ortíz, ed. (Madrid: Editora Nacional, 1982).

Clause 21, Philip IV’s Testament:
If God decides that I died before the Prince, my son, or any other male that is to succeed me at fourteen years of age, wishing to provide the best possible government for my kingdoms and subjects, I name as governor (governadora) of all the kingdoms, states, and lordships, and as tutor (tutora) of the prince, my son, and of any other son or daughter, who succeeds me, the queen doña Mariana, my very precious and beloved wife, with all the faculties and power that in conformity to the laws, royal charters, privileges, styles and customs of each of my kingdoms, states, and lordships, I may bequeath her, repealing what I may change or eliminate. In
order that with only this appointment, without need of another act, oath, or
discernment of the said tutorship, from the same day that I die, she is able to govern
in the same manner and with the same authority that I do, because it is my will to
communicate and give her [the authority] that I have, and all that is necessary, not
withholding anything, so that as the said tutor of the son or daughter that would
succeed me, she has the entire government and direction of all my kingdoms in
peace and war, until the son or daughter who succeeds me reaches the fourteenth
year needed to govern (my italics).

Clause 35 of Philip IV’s Testament (excerpt):

The papers of government that I often and usually sign, the queen should also sign
in the same manner and place. The resolutions that she would take in consultations,
whether they are about matters of peace, or of government, grants and justice, as
well as the orders that she may give should be executed in the same way as when I
was the one resolving them. And I do not hold back any of the faculties that I have
[as king] and that she assumes as tutor, curator, and governor, even if that entails
to make and proclaim new laws or revoke them. In order for this to be so, I give her
as much power as it resides in me for everything that is necessary and convenient,
so that she is able to use the greatest prerogatives and royal power (regalías) that
belong to the Dignity [of kingship], so that she can provide for all the viceroyalties,
governorships, and other offices of peace and war, and for her to do her will in
everything that may be necessary and convenient, but always with the opinion of the
[Regency] Council and not in another manner...(my italics).

[Los despachos que Yo suelo y acostumbro firmar, ha de firmar la Reyna en el mismo lugar que yo
lo hago; y las resoluciones que tomare en las consultas, así como en materias de paz, como de
gobierno, gracia y justicia y órdenes que embiare, se han de ejecutar de la misma manera, que si Yo
viviendo las resolviere. Y no reservo de la facultad que como a tutora, curadora y governadora le
compitiere, nada de de lo que a mí me toca, aunque sea hacer y promulgar leyes de nuevo, o
revocarlas; porque si para esto fuere menester, le doy quanto poder en mí reside para todo lo
necesario y conveniente y para que use de las mayores prerogativas y regalías que tocan a la
Dignidad; y para que provea todos los virreynatos, goviernos, y demás oficios de paz y guerra, y
haga y obre su voluntad en quanto conviniere y fuere menester; pero aconsejándose siempre con la
dicha Junta y no de otra manera...]
Noblewomen’s Social and Political Prerogatives, by Vanessa de Cruz

In Spain, the Pragmáticas de Cortesías (Royal Regulation of form of address) showed the noblewomen’s image as members of the privileged elite, trying to reflect the modern social structure, the rigid principles on which it was based, and to regulate the behavior of its members. Thus, the pragmatic of forms of address, both written and orally, were enacted by the Spanish Kings since Philip II. His grandson, Philip IV, tried to simplify the old hyperbolic expressions commonly used to address the members of the social, political and ecclesiastical elites. In these regulations were included the appropriate forms of address with women considering themselves as members of a social group within the nobility, putting them on a level with their male counterparts and, thereby, receiving the same treatment as their husbands, by law. In addition, we can observe how gradually the legislation allowed the treatment of some groups of women who were not married or who served in the Royal Households. Thus, both the Grandee’s firstborn daughters, who were the heirs of their estates, and the ladies-in-waiting and the dueñas de honor (widowed noblewomen who took care of the ladies-in-waiting), who served in the Queen's Household, were also addressed as "Your Ladyship".

Pragmática en que se da la orden y forma que se ha de tener y guardar, en los tratamientos y cortesías de palabra y por escrito…, Madrid, Pedro Madrigal, 1586. Philip II.

That the Queens of our Kingdoms must be keep and use the same order and style as with their spouses Kings. As with the Princesses of these Kingdoms, the same (which has been said) must be used with their Princes.

With both sons-in-law and brothers-in-law of the Kings of these our Kingdoms, the same treatment as with their wives must be keep, and with the daughters-in-law and sisters-in-law of these Kings, the same as with their husbands.

The Marquises and Counts, the High Commanders of the Orders of Santiago, Calatrava and Alcántara, and the Presidents of our Councils and our Supreme Courts, they should be treated and addressed as Your Honor/Your Lordship both written and orally, and not for any other person.

The form of address between women, and with each other, written and orally, must be the same as (which has been said) and must be kept for their husbands.

[Que con las Reynas destos nuestros Reynos se guarde y tenga la misma orden y estilo que con los Reyes dellos: y con las Princesas destos dichos reynos, la que (está dicho) se ha de tener con los Príncipes dellos.
Que a los yernos y cuñados de los Reyes destos nuestros reynos, se haga el tratamiento que a sus mugeres, y a las nueras y cuñadas de los dichos Reyes, el mismo que a sus maridos.
Que a los Marqueses, y Condes, y comendadores mayores de las Ordenes de Santiago, Calatrava, y Alcántara, y Presidentes de los otros nuestros Consejos, y Chancillerías se pueda llamar y escribir señoría por escrito y de palabra, y no à otra persona alguna.
Que le tratamiento a las mugeres, y entre ellas mismas, por escrito y de palabra, sea el mismo que (está dicho) se ha de hazer a sus maridos.]
...it is our favor and our will that those who use Your Ladyship as a form of address with the daughters-in-law of the Lords, those who are married with the firstborns and heirs of their states, and to the firstborn daughters, who unavoidably are going to inherit their states because of the lack of brothers to precede them in the inheritance, they don’t incur the penalties of this our law which we will later declare, or any other penalty, considering that we declare as prohibited to use Your Honor/Your Lordship/Your Ladyship, written or orally, as a form of address for any other person of different quality, status or condition.

And we declare, that the proper form of address to wives of the Grandees, the Lords and the other noblemen who must be addressed (as it has been said) as Your Honor/Your Lordship, and between these women each other, is the same that must be keep to their husbands, both written and orally.

The status and authority of noble and royal women which the pragmáticas reales (royal regulations) implied reached beyond symbolic forms of address. The life of Mariana of Austria, Austrian Archduchess and Queen regent of Spain, provides a vivid example of the power, authority, and influence that royal and noblewomen exercised in early modern Spain and the Habsburg empire.

Mariana of Austria’s Political and Diplomatic Networks, by Silvia Z. Mitchell

The Austrian Archduchess Mariana of Austria was born in Wiener Neustadt on December 23, 1634. She spent her formative years in the Imperial court of her father, Emperor Ferdinand III and her Spanish Habsburg mother, Empress Maria, growing up
against the background of the Thirty Years War (1618-1648). As an oldest daughter, Mariana had been singled out to play a protagonist role in her dynasty, having been promised as a child to Prince Balthasar Carlos, who was expected to succeed his father, Philip IV, as king of Spain. After the prince’s sudden death in 1646, Mariana’s father immediately arranged her marriage to the father of the groom instead, who had recently become a widower. Barely fifteen years old, Mariana arrived in Madrid in 1649 to begin her rule as queen consort. She fulfilled the traditional functions of a queen, acting as a link between the Spanish and Austrian Habsburgs and giving birth to several children, of whom two reached adulthood. After her husband’s death, she assumed the reins of power as regent during the minority of her son, Carlos II of Spain, ruling with the titles of queen tutor, governor, and curator from December 17, 1665 until November 6, 1675. While Mariana enjoyed and exercised significant authority as regent, the end of her tenure in office was plagued by factional struggles that culminated with a bloodless coup against her regime. Led by the king’s illegitimate half-brother, don Juan of Austria, twenty-three members of the upper aristocracy formed a confederation in late 1676 demanding the permanent separation of the king from his mother and the installation of don Juan as the king’s main advisor. A few weeks later, Carlos II left the palace in secret and a month later ordered Mariana to “retire” to the city of Toledo. During her two-and-a-half years of exile, Mariana remained involved in Spanish and Habsburg politics. She helped Carlos II withdraw from a marriage alliance with the Empire (that she had negotiated) by interceding with her brother, Emperor Leopold I, on behalf of her son. She went on to fully support Carlos II’s marriage to the French princess, Maria Louisa of Orleans, which took place in late 1679. Mariana returned to court at the same time and completely vindicated. She established a luxurious residence in a private palace a block away from the Alcazar in Madrid, which became a political and diplomatic center of power, often competing with those of the actual court. As queen dowager, she was especially influential in the European stage as an advocate for the rights of her great-grandson, Joseph Ferdinand of Bavaria, to the Spanish Crown. She died in Madrid of breast cancer on May 16, 1696.

Mariana’s political trajectory, first as an Austrian Archduchess, later queen consort of Spain, as acting ruler, and then as queen “mother,” crossed with that of many other women, whose lives had also been shaped by family, local politics, and international events. These women’s lives, essentially transnational, multicultural, and multilingual, intertwined and formed networks that included Habsburg relatives, religious women at the Convent of the Descalzas Reales, and noblewomen from various regions of Habsburg Europe. Their correspondence illustrates the gendered, political, religious, and social nature of these royal and aristocratic networks that connected political spaces, such as the Spanish, French and Imperial courts, with other institutions and noble households.

2. RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL SPACES

The Descalzas Reales served as an important point of contact between the Habsburgs inside and outside Madrid. Founded by Juana of Austria in 1559, the institution’s political role in Madrid and in the European stage, during the rules of Philip III and Philip IV has been abundantly documented by scholars such as Magdalena S. Sánchez, Luc Duerloo, Eleanor Goodman, and more recently Martha Hoffman.
Royal Women and the Descalzas Reales, by Silvia Z. Mitchell

During Mariana’s regency, the women in the Descalzas Reales played a key role in the political events of the period. For instance, rumors of conspiracies against don Juan of Austria, who had challenged Mariana’s authority in 1669 and 1676, and whose daughter was a professed nun in the convent, were often associated with the women in the Descalzas. During Mariana’s exile, these women supported the queen in a variety of ways, including maintaining her informed and, as will be clear below, providing her with moral and spiritual support. They also became an indirect link between Mariana and the Queen of France, Maria Theresa of Austria (1638-1683), which very likely influenced Mariana’s decision to support her son’s marriage to the French candidate.

Mariana of Austria wrote the following note to her relative and friend, Sor Mariana de la Cruz, shortly after her son abruptly left the Palace without her knowledge on January 14, 1677. (Sor Mariana was the illegitimate daughter of the Cardinal-Infante Ferdinand of Austria.) Carlos II’s move marked the beginning of a change of regime and put into motion Mariana’s exile.

I do not doubt what you suggest in your paper that it was God’s will to take for himself my son whom I loved with so much affection; and because of the great need that he may be suffering, I assure you that this blow has pierced my heart and that it will be necessary to believe that God’s assistance will help me find resignation in his Divine Will, as I desire to do with all of my ability. But my feelings of sadness are great nevertheless. God has me here facing so much work! I ask you, although I know you always do, to entrust me [to God] so that I can tolerate this blow, since the tenderness I have for my son is so great that those feelings cannot just disapper.

[Entrust] my son [to God] as well, although I hope he will not need his mercy. I wish I could come there as soon as possible so that I can console myself with you, something that I need to do very much so, I assure you. God protect you, from the Palace, today Thursday, 1677.

Once Mariana left Madrid following her son’s order, she soon established a dynamic communication network between Toledo, her new place of residence, and Madrid. This communication network, in which the women of the Descalzas played a prominent role, soon became international and linked the nuns with the French court and Mariana in Toledo. The religious women, for instance, sent Mariana gifts, news, and information to their Habsburg relatives outside Spain, thus fulfilling, perhaps unwittingly, an important political and diplomatic role as well. Evidently, Mariana relied on the women as is clear in
a note she wrote a few weeks into her exile:

I am very certain of what you represent to me in the letter of the 9th and I appreciate the gift basket¹ and the care that all of you put in entrusting me to God, since I have so much affection for that community. I have never needed these [prayers] more than I do at this moment, although I try to conform myself with God’s Will at all times; I was sorry that I did not have time to say goodbye to the Abbess personally, who I always remember as is fitting and as I do all the other religious women there; send them all my regards. God be with you; from Aranjuez on 19 March 1677. I the Queen².

[Estoy muy cierta de lo que me representais en vuestra carta de 9, estimandoos el regalo de las cestilla y el cuidado de encomendarme a Dios en essa comunidad que tanto cariño tengo pues nunca mas necesito destino que aora, aunque siempre dejando conformara con la boluntad divina en todos tiempos quanto senti no poderme despedirme antes de la abadessa cosas pues en mi siempre tendra la memoria della como tan propia a todas las religiosas poneis mis recados. Dios os guarde de Aranjuez a 19 de Marzo 1677. Yo la Reyna.] AGP, Descalzas Reales, c. 6, exp. 31, folio 46r.

The following are short excerpts written by Queen Maria Theresa of Austria, who had grown up among the women in the monastery. The first two were written to her relatives in the Descalzas Reales, and record her immediate reaction to the events in Madrid that resulted in Mariana’s exile. Maria Theresa was Mariana’s political enemy during much of her regency, while Spain was at war with France. Yet, they had forged a close friendship while Mariana was the queen consort, which evidently continued for years afterwards. (Maria Theresa of Austria was the eldest daughter of Philip IV, and thus Mariana’s step-daughter. They were reportedly close until Maria Theresa left to become Queen of France in 1659.)

I cannot hold back my feelings and I am compelled to tell you how I absolutely disapprove of what my brother (Carlos II) has done, who has left like that, without saying anything to the queen, who is in effect his mother. Whatever reasons he may have had to act in such manner, they were not an excuse to have proceeded as he did since he should remember that the queen in not his subject. It is clear that he is not being counseled very well. I am not the only one who feels this way and there is another person and my relative, who also strongly disapproves. This is not surprising since he (Louis XIV) has always been an obedient and good son of his mother. March 2, 1677.

[…yo no puedo dejar de dezirte que no apruebo lo que mi hermano a echo de hirse sin dezir nada a la Reyna que en efecto es su madre y por mas razones que tubiesse para ello no son bastantes para

¹ The nuns at the Descalzas sent gifts to the Royal family often, many of the letters they wrote to the Convent, acknowledge the “basquets” the nuns sent which contain fruits, flowers, and foodstuffs.
² “Estoy muy cierta de lo que me representais en vuestra carta de 9, estimandoos el regalo de las cestilla y el cuidado de encomendarme a Dios en essa comunidad que tanto cariño tengo pues nunca mas necesito destino que aora, aunque siempre dejando conformara con la boluntad divina en todos tiempos quanto senti no poderme despedirme antes de la abadessa cosas pues en mi siempre tendra la memoria della como tan propia a todas las religiosas poneis mis recados. Dios os guarde de Aranjuez a 19 de Marzo 1677. Yo la Reyna” AGP Descalzas Reales, c. 6, exp. 31, folio 46r.
vasalla.... y cierto no esta aconsejado y en esto no soy sola yo quien lo dize que ay otra persona que es mi pariente que lo desapruueba pues assido siempre obediente y buen hijo de su madre…] AGP, Descalzas Reales, c. 7, exp. 1.

I hope to God that everything is good over there and successful with the [new] government, but I cannot approve that they obligated the queen to leave Madrid and then that her son did not even go to say proper good byes to her. I cannot suffer what they are doing with her, and the relative that you asked me about is of course, my husband (Louis XIV of France). Since he has always been a good son, he disapproves what my brother is doing. Maria Theresa, 14 April 1677.

[“...Dios quiera que todo lo de por alla este ya bien y de acierto en el gobierno que no puedo aprobar el que ayan obligado a la Reyna de salir de Madrid y luego su hijo no hirse a despedir de ella que cierto no puedo sufrirlo lo que hazen con ella, y el pariente que tu no entiendes es mi marido que como es assido siempre buen hijo desaprueba lo que mi hermano haze...”] AGP Descalzas Reales, c. 7, exp. 1.

Ana Dorotea, Marquise of Austria (1611-1694) and the Descalzas Reales, by Vanessa de Cruz

The role played by Ana Dorotea at the Madrid court was completely opposed to the image proffered by her biographers and hagiographers in print, as they considered her a “silent” nun. On the contrary, Ana Dorotea, although an illegitimate daughter of Rudolph II, behaved as a full-fledged Habsburg, maneuvering and influencing the political scene from within the Descalzas Reales. For her, as for the female Habsburgs who lived before her, the convent did not entail seclusion from the outside world or the abandonment of her dynastic obligations, but the transformation of the Descalzas Reales into one more center of power within the Spanish monarchy. Within the walls of the monastery, Ana Dorotea received and met with other members of the royal family, ministers, ambassadors, and nuncios and dispatch her words and wishes beyond the cloister. For further information, see Vanessa de Cruz, “An Illegitimate Habsburg: Ana Dorotea de la Concepción, Marquise of Austria (1611-1694)”. In: Anne J. Cruz and Maria Galli Stampino (eds.), The Habsburg Women in Early Modern Europe, Ashgate. Forthcoming, 2012.

Francisco Díaz, Exemplar religioso, propuesto e las funerales exequias...de la Excelentíssima señora Soror Ana Dorotea de la Concepción, marquesa de Austria, Madrid, 1694. Printed funeral sermon, describing Sor Ana Dorotea de la Concepción as a “silent” nun.

Ana Dorotea was an “exemplary, silent and most serene religious princess”. She lived “seeking refuge and retirement from all communication, for she endeavored to remain inward and not at all outward; and she managed that with so joyful a spirit that she achieved a state in which she no longer found her relations with other creatures amusing, and conversations with her sisters encumbered her interiority.” (23, 44)

[Ana Dorotea fue una “ejemplar, silenciosa y Serenísima Princesa, Religiosa”. Ella vivió “procurando esconderse, y retirarse de toda humana comunicación, porque trabajo mucho en ser toda
interior, y exterior nada; y lo llego a conseguir con tanta felicidad de espíritu, que llego a estado, que ni el trato con las criaturas la divertía, ni las conversaciones con sus Hermanas la embaraçaban los empleos de su interior” (23, 44).

Ana Dorotea de la Concepcion’s, letters addressed to the Vatican court. 17th century. Archivio Segreto Vaticano and Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome, Italy.
3. ROYAL AND ARISTOCRATIC NETWORKS AND LETTER WRITING

Royal and noblewomen in early modern Spain were highly educated. They used their literacy, education, and epistolary skills to develop and maintain networks of power and authority within Spain and across Europe. Because they spoke and wrote several languages, it takes a network of modern scholars to reproduce their lives and connections.

Women’s Education and Literacy, by Vanessa de Cruz

Although moralists and humanists had underscored in their pedagogical treatises and moral discourses how dangerous could be a quill in a woman’s hand –mainly because women could lose their “honor” by just writing, an idea that was repeatedly and perfectly represented in the Golden Age theater. Yet, female aristocrats were the exception. In fact, not being able to read or write was considered a “fault” in a noblewoman. In that sense, the letter became a space for the “othering.” As the perfect way to appear in the public and institutional scene, it was an instrument not only for intimate communication but also to place themselves as political and cultural informants, agents, and patrons. Ability to read and write was a must for women when they were called upon to manage their estates and serve in the queens royal households. Educational treatises for noblewomen reveal their level of literacy and their exceptional condition.

As Luisa María de Padilla, countess of Aranda argued in her Nobleza virtuosa (Zaragoza: Juan de Lanaja, 1637):

Concerning correspondence by letters and books I have read, I declare that I am not a follower of those who think that even noblewomen must not read or write. This thinking seems really strict to me and it would be a great fault for a lady, especially for her husband’s letters, the rule of her house and even its state during his absence. Besides, she would be deprived of the great spiritual benefit that is [available] in reading good books. Above this, I judge that for some capable women, whose inclination is very well-known, it would be wrong not to study Grammar and some Philosophy. Because those who have higher understandings know that staying all the day sitting on cushions, and maybe if they follow this path they would avoid others which are worse, trying to fancy themselves showing their wit and to use it for less decent purposes. That many women have wit for sciences and some are not incapable, as some men have said, is proved by the experience of so many who, in past ages, were excellent in all the arts…

[Con lo que he tocado de las correspondencias por cartas y lecturas de libros, declaro no seguir la opinión de algunos que aún las mujeres nobles no quieren sepan leer y escribir. Me parece muy rigurosa y que sería gran falta en una señora, así para las cartas de su marido, como para gobernar su casa y aún su estado en ausencia de él, y se privaría del gran provecho espiritual que se halla en la lectura de los buenos libros. Antes juzgaría yo que algunas de tal calidad conociamente inclinadas a ello no les estaría mal estudiar la gramática y algo de filosofía, porque las que tienen entendimientos superiores a la ocupación de la almohadilla, quizá si diese por este camino huirían de otros que, están peor, en que procuran gallardear con el ingenio y hacer de él menos decentes empleos, que el tenerle muchas mujeres apto para las ciencias y no ser incapacaces de ellas, como algunos han dicho,
The different manuals of letter writing and books of letters for secretaries printed in Spain during the 16th and 17th centuries, unlike those published in other countries, included a significant number of examples of letters written by women, although this number was always less than the examples written by men. According to these treatises, the perfect female letter-writers were noblewomen and nuns. Therefore their social status and their membership in the privileged classes was always pointed out by the authors. These works offer a glimpse of the "exemplary" of the female correspondence: women had sent and received letters of friendship, announcements, congratulations, consolatory, thanks for presents and gifts, and courtesy... But women had also written about business issues, asked for royal favors, applied for positions and recommended people... as Gabriel Pérez del Barrio mentioned in his "Familiar Letters from Ladies to their Queen, the Infantas and the Ladies their friends."

Table 1. Female letters in epistolary manuals printed in Spain during the 16th-17th centuries.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>AUTHOR</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>LETTERS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Gaspar de Tejeda</td>
<td><em>Cosa Nueva. Estilo de escribir cartas mensageras</em>, Valladolid: Sebastián Martínez, 1549</td>
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<td><em>Cosa Nueva. Primero libro de cartas mensageras</em>, Valladolid: Sebastián Martínez, 1553</td>
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<td><em>Segundo libro de cartas mensageras</em>, Valladolid: Sebastián Martínez, 1553</td>
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<td>Juan de Icár</td>
<td><em>Nuevo estilo d’escriver cartas mensageras</em>, Zaragoza: Agustín Millán, 1552</td>
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<td>Diego Martínez</td>
<td><em>Formulario y estilo curioso de escribir cartas missivas</em>, Madrid: Pedro Madrigal, 1599</td>
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<td>Juan Vicente Peliger</td>
<td><em>Formulario de las previsiones que en latín y romance</em>, Medina del Campo: Francisco del Canto, 1576</td>
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<td>Jerónimo Paulo de Manzanares</td>
<td><em>Estilo y formulario de cartas familiares</em>, Madrid: Luis Sánchez, 1600</td>
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<td>Gabriel Pérez del Barrio</td>
<td><em>Dirección de secretarios de señores</em>, Madrid: Alonso Martín de Balboa, 1613</td>
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<td><em>Secretario de Señores</em>, Madrid: viuda de Fernando Correa, 1622</td>
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<td>Juan Fernández Abarca</td>
<td><em>Discurso de las partes y calidades</em>, Lisboa: Pedro Craesbeeck, 1618</td>
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<td>Juan Páez de Valenzuela</td>
<td><em>Nuevo estilo y formulario de escribir cartas missivas</em>, Córdoba: Salvador de Cea Tesa, 1630</td>
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<td>Gabriel José de la Gasca</td>
<td><em>Manual de avisos para el perfecto cortesano</em>, Madrid: Roque Rico de Miranda, 1681</td>
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Table 2. Letters included in the first epistolary manual for women by Gabriel Pérez del Barrio, (1613). Source: Gabriel Pérez del Barrio, Dirección de secretarios de señores..., Madrid: Alonso Martín de Balboa, 1613. Title: “Familiar Letters from Ladies to their Queen, the Infantas and the Ladies their friends…”

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4. ROYAL AND NOBLEWOMEN’S LETTERS

Margarita de Cardona, baroness of Dietrichstein, her family and the Habsburgs, by Vanessa de la Cruz

Margarita de Cardona (1535?-1609) – married to Adam of Dietrichstein in 1555 – served the Empress Maria of Habsburg from the time when the latter was still Infanta of Spain until her death in 1603. So, she moved from Castile to the Imperial Court of Wien in 1554, then to the Imperial Court of Prague in 1583 and came back to Madrid with her daughter Beatriz in 1595, to live with the Empress at the Descalzas Reales. By serving the Empress, Margarita de Cardona established herself and her family as powerful political
players and as a loyal family to the Habsburgs and the Pope, even after she was widowed. Thanks to her privileged position, the Dietrichsteins became cultural and political patrons not only at the Imperial court but also in Madrid (where two of her daughters, Ana and Hipólita, had served at the Royal Household since 1573) and Brussels. Through the first letter, I would point out the strategies developed by the baroness and I will argue how significant it was to serve at the female imperial household for this lady in order to reach patronage benefits, present herself as a political intermediary between Habsburg courts and, obviously, achieve a profitable marriage for her children.

The second one is a letter written by Beatriz de Dietrichstein to her brother, the Cardinal Francisco. Once Beatriz of Dietrichstein arrived in Madrid with her mother, she served as lady-in-waiting in the Queen’s Royal Household and later she married the Marquis of Mondéjar, one of the most powerful men at the court of Philip III. In 1604, she retired to the convent of Our Lady of Constantinople in Madrid as a widow, where she spent all her life. Through this second letter, I would point out how Beatriz, although she lived cloistered, was her brother’s agent in Spain, was in contact with the Royal family, the imperial ambassador and the members of the court. Therefore, she played an important political and social role as a patroness.

Margarita of Cardona’s letter to the Cardinal Pietro Aldobrandini, asking him to intercede with the Pope on behalf of her son, Francisco of Dietrichstein, to be named Cardinal. Madrid, May 24, 1598. ASV, Seg. di Stato, Spagna, 52, f. 83.

Your Eminence

Due perhaps to my long silence and to the absence at that court of Don Francisco, my son, I probably am out of the memory of Your Eminence, but I have always enquired the Pope’s ministers about the health of Your Eminence, and I duly have felt elated knowing that it was well. Also I have felt delighted for the happy achievement made by Your Eminence at Ferrara, because it could not been expected less of Your Eminence’s great value and wisdom, which I congratulate. And I beg you to believe that there is not a person in Spain who really wants to be more at your service than me, because I owe much to the many favors that His Holiness and Your Eminence have done for me and my son, who, I guess, must be at your court back by now. I implore Your Eminence to continue to favor him there, as should His Holiness honor him and favor him in accordance with the wishes of the Empress, my Lady, who once again [expressed this] in a letter written by her own hand, which will be delivered by Monsignor Comissioner [Paulo Emilio Zachia], whom I have served here as far as I could, as is due a minister of His Holiness. And I shall do the same with everyone who belongs to the Holy See, may God preserve the government of His Holiness for many years and protect Your Eminence as I wish.

Kissing Your Eminence’s hands, your best servant.

[Ilustrísimo Señor

Aunque con mi largo silencio y la ausencia de don Francisco, mi hijo, de esa corte debo de estar muy fuera de la memoria de Vuestra Señoría Ilustrísima, siempre he tenido voluntad de preguntar a los ministros del Papa de la salud de Vuestra Señoría Ilustrísima, y me he holgado lo que es razón de saber que la tenía. Y de la misma manera del feliz suceso que Vuestra Señoría Ilustrísima tuvo en
Ferrara, que no se podía esperar menos del gran valor y prudencia de Vuestra Señoría Ilustrísima, a quien doy la enhorabuena. Y le suplico crea que no hay en España quien con más veras desee empearse en su servicio que yo, pues lo dobo a los muchos favores que de Su Santidad y de Vuestra Señoría Ilustrísima hemos recibido yo y mi hijo, el cual creo que será a estas horas de vuelta a esa corte. Donde suplico a Vuestra Señoría Ilustrísima muy de veras se sirva de continuar favoreciéndole con Su Beatitud para que le honre y haga merced conforme al deseo de la Emperatriz, mi señora, y a lo que de nuevo le escribe de su mano con monseñor el Comisario, a quien he servido aquí en lo poco que he podido como a ministro de Su Santidad. Y lo mismo procurso hacer a todos los dependientes de esa Santa Sede. Que Dios conserve largos años bajo el gobierno de Su Beatitud y la Ilustrísima persona de Vuestra Señoría Ilustrísima guarde como yo deseo.
Besa las manos a Vuestra Señoría Ilustrísima su mayor servidora.

Beatriz of Dietrichstein’s letter to his brother, the Cardinal Francisco (1619), describing her interview with King Philip IV and his ministers, and a letter to the Imperial ambassador, Khevenhüller. Moravsky Zemsky Archiv v Brne (Archive of the Land of Brno), Brno, Czech Republic. Madrid, March 28, 1619. MZAB, G-140, Kart. c. 436, n. 1907/90, ff. 20-23.

I received two [letters] from Your Excellency, January 25 and 15… On the 20th, much to my delight, I spoke with His Majesty, who came to visit the convent, and with the Duke of Infantado and Duke of Uceda, talking all about Your Excellency, about your perilous situation and the services that you are doing for the Habsburg dynasty. I informed them very slowly and they listened to me with pleasure. I assure Your Excellency that you have made very angry all the ministers. And if the King does not favor us, it is not due to lack of knowledge and diligence, because they all say that Moravia is supported happily because of the Cardinal Dietrichstein, whom we can thank God for everything. And at court, the Great Lords and ministers are all in favour of us, and every one of them has offered in front of me to be Your Excellency’s agent.

A few days ago, I received a gracious message from the ambassador Khevenhüller, through the abbot of Castellón, who knew how to answer him better than I could have done. The message was that he was aware of how I was trying to seek a pension for Your Excellency, and he was wondering to know if I had the order and the approval of Your Excellency. My answer sent was… that I had Your Excellency’s license for all these occasions of your service and your representation, thus it was my turn to receive an agreement with the King. I did not tell him more and that the key for the Earl [of Villaflor, their nephew] is a business in the hands and expenses of the Infanta Doña Margarita… and if our sister [Ana of Dietrichstein] starts to serve at the Royal Household we will not need other tongues/bigmouths, she will arrive to Madrid in three days.

[Me hallo con dos [cartas] de Vuestra Excelencia, de 25 y 15 de enero… muy a mi gusto hablé a 20 de este a su Majestad, que entró a este convento y a los duques del Infantado y Uceda, todo sobre Vuestra Excelencia, en el peligro que estaba y los servicios que hacen a la casa de Austria, informándoles muy despacio y escuchándome de muy buena gana, que certifico a Vuestra Excelencia tiene [a] todos los ministros muy enfadados. Y si no nos hiciere merced el Rey, no quedan por falta de conocimiento y diligencia, que todos dicen que por el Cardenal Dietrichstein se sustenta la Moravia y podemos de todo dar muchas gracias a Dios. Y que tenemos en la corte los mayores señores y ministros deudos nuestros, que cada uno me ha ofrecido ser agente de Vuestra Excelencia.
Del embajador Khevenhüller he tenido un recado bien donoso estos días por el abad de Castellón, que le supo responder mejor de lo que yo pudiera haber hecho y fue que había sabido que yo pretendía una pensión para Vuestra Excelencia, que deseaba saber si era en orden y beneplácito de Vuestra Excelencia. Yo le volví la respuesta... que así en las ocasiones que se ofrecían tenía licencia de Vuestra Excelencia para todo aquello que fuese de representación a su servicio y persona de Vuestra Excelencia, que esto me tocaba a mí hacer acuerdo al Rey... Sin decirle más de la llave del conde [de Villaflor, su sobrino], que este es negocio de la infanta doña Margarita y a su cargo... y si entra nuestra hermana [Ana de Dietrichstein] en palacio no habremos menester otras lenguas, que la espero dentro de tres días será aquí [en Madrid].]

Mariana of Austria’s letters to the Countess of Harrach, by Laura Oliván Santaliestra and Silvia Mitchell

Johanna Theresia Lamberg was born in Würben in 1639, the daughter of the Count of Lamberg, Johann Maximilian and Judith Rebecca Eleonore Lamberg. Lamberg was chosen to represent Imperial interests in Osnabrück as part of the negotiations that culminated in the Peace of Westphalia in 1648. Thus, Johanna was exposed from a young age to politics and diplomacy, since her father took her and his entire family to the peace negotiations. When he was named Imperial ambassador to Madrid, Johanna entered the queen’s royal household, marking the beginnings of a friendship that was to last almost half a century. Johanna lived in Madrid from 1653 to 1661. She learned Spanish and adopted many of the Spanish customs of the court. Although Mariana was fluent in Spanish, she evidently preferred to communicate with her friend in German. In 1661, Johanna married the Count of Harrach, who had been sent to Madrid as an extraordinary ambassador from Vienna. Her husband’s appointment was short, and thus, Johanna returned to her native land as a married woman. In 1661, the two women began a very intimate correspondence that lasted until 1673, when the Count of Harrach was sent again to Madrid as the Imperial Ambassador.

From 1673 to 1676, Johanna resided with her husband in the Spanish court. He owed his appointment to his wife, whose friendship with Mariana, who was the ruler of the monarchy, was well-known. The couple became very important political figures, particularly Johanna, who occupied a prominent role at court, close to that of a “favorite” of the queen. Johanna left Madrid in 1676, as the political turmoil in Madrid made Mariana’s position untenable. The Count of Harrach stayed behind and supported Mariana during this very difficult period that ended with her exile to the city of Toledo. He left in the summer of 1677, carrying with him two splendid portraits of the queen and the king by the court painter, Juan Carreño de Miranda, which Mariana had commissioned as a gift for Harrach. (They are part of the Harrach collection, which has become one of the most important private collections of art in Europe.) The queen and the countess resumed the correspondence once Johanna left Madrid and continued to communicate periodically until the queen’s death in 1696. Johanna von Harrach died in Vienna in 1716.

Close to 400 letters Mariana wrote to her friend survived. The letters, written in a German dialect, are not easy to understand due to Mariana’s difficult handwriting. (It is clear that the countess herself had trouble reading them and she commissioned someone to summarize the content of the letters.) The letters, which have not been studied before, have the potential to shed significant light onto the queen’s personality and her experiences as queen consort, regent, and dowager. This is particularly clear in the small sample presented here.
Mariana wrote the letter of November 4, 1676 close to two months before the coup against her regime took place. In it, we find no evidence that she was aware that a conspiracy against her regime was about to explode in the open. The short comment about the “princess” is worth noting. It referred to Mariana’s granddaughter, Maria Antonia of Austria (1669-1692), who was at the time engaged to Carlos II. Maria Antonia had strong claims to succeed the Spanish Crown. Although many members of the ruling elite were strongly against the marriage to a large extent because it meant that the birth of a successor would be postponed for many years (the archduchess was only seven years old), ministers in the State Council unanimously recognized the bride’s rights to the succession and wanted the little archduchess to live in Spain in order to be raised under Mariana’s protection. This solution would have solved the succession problem temporarily and would have allowed Carlos II to marry (if it was deemed convenient) a bride that could give the king and the monarchy a successor immediately. Mariana’s comment about writing to the Empress was likely on the subject of whether the princess would be allowed to live in Madrid, although clearly she did not expect a positive response. The second letter was written after the coup against her regime had taken place. Mariana lamented her situation, complaining about the lack of loyalty shown by many, including those whom she had patronized extensively. Her hopes that nothing worse would take place are particularly poignant. Two days after writing this letter, Carlos II left the palace in secret, removing his presence from his mother’s side. This act marked Mariana’s public loss of political power and put her exile into motion, which began on March 2, 1677.

Dear Johanna. I hope that by the time you get this letter you and your children already reached Germany safely. Believe me when I tell you how lonely I feel without you here and how often I think of you. All the letters you sent me from the trip arrived in good condition, including the last one from Solsona dated October 1st … Praise the Lord, my son and I are well; we had a very pleasant time, not only in Pred […] but in the monastery as well… We came back yesterday because there is a play today, so I have only time for these short lines. I wanted you to know that I will not have a lot of time to write, although I only want you to remember me while in Vienna. From now on, I will write to you with more frequency. I already wrote to the Empress about the princess as you counseled me to do so, but I doubt that she would see on that subject the same way as I do. Send my regards to your father and mother in my name and to your children, especially to la Pepa (Johanna’s daughter). I do not have time any longer now. I remain your merciful queen and mistress.

Madrid, November 4, 1676. Mariana.
Dear Johanna. I received both of your letters of the 5th and the 11th last. I was happy to see that you are safe and that you have been able to see your parents. I am also pleased about the news of my granddaughter. This is only a short note; I am writing so that you stop worrying, since I imagine that you have heard already what happened here. You should feel bad for me as I am very sad and the only thing that sustains me is my faith. As you know, everyone has turned out to be utterly deceitful here; those who have received the best of me have become my greatest enemies, and I truly believe… out of jealousy. You should consider yourself fortunate about not being here since these are the beginnings of what surely will become very difficult and uncertain times. I hope to God that nothing worse will occur or more bad luck will befall me, against God and justice… everything seems to be against me, and with my bad luck, I do not know how everything is going to end. I owe a lot to the Count [of Harrach], although he cannot help me any longer; I will nevertheless repay him as soon as I am able. My only consolation for the moment is that my son is not against me, although this good child is not alone. From him, I can expect only all that is good because he will not abandon me. In my state of isolation nobody can understand how I really feel. They all assume that my migraines are the reason for my discomfort, although you know that is nothing new in my case. You will excuse me, but I cannot hide my heavy heart. This is it for now, I remain your merciful queen and mistress. Madrid, January 12, 1677. Mariana

Questions for Discussion:

- Was the condition of aristocratic and royal women in Spain different than that of their counterparts in England, France, Northern Europe, and Italy? Was it different from their counterparts in the Spanish Empire?
• If aristocratic and royal women in other parts of Europe had similar power and influence than those in Spain or had power and influence in culturally different ways, must we then redefine the idea of a European patriarchy? How do we analyze the power of these women while still acknowledging the institutional limitations that all women faced because of their gender?
• How did early modern men evaluate aristocratic women and their potential for power and influence and how do economic and political concerns affect this evaluation?
• How do gender and social rank interact? Are aristocratic women more influenced by the gender norms of their culture and time period or by the behavior expected from members of their juridical and social rank? Are women of lower social and cultural status affected more by social status or gender?
• How does age affect perceptions of women in the early modern period? In the secular world, women gained authority and respect as they moved through marriage, widowhood, and potential guardianship or regency. Is there a different life-cycle for women in a convent? What is the difference between younger and older generations?