

# WAYS OF LOVING GOD: A NEW RELIGIOUS SENSIBILITY IN ENLIGHTENED PORTUGAL. CENSORING THE CORRESPONDENCE OF SOROR JOANA DO LOURIÇAL (1779)

## FORMAS DE AMAR A DIOS: UNA NUEVA SENSIBILIDAD RELIGIOSA EN EL PORTUGAL ILUSTRADO. LA CENSURA DE LA CORRESPONDENCIA DE SOROR JOANA DO LOURIÇAL (1779)

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### Abstract

When, in 1779, the nuns of the convent of Louriçal addressed to the *Real Mesa Censória* a request to print the sixty-two letters that the Poor Clare nun Joana do Louriçal had written to her confessor, they might not have expected their project to be frustrated. Among the problems pointed out, gender bias and a new religious sensibility are among the most striking: bloody penance provokes horror, stigmata arouse mistrust and are considered not suitable for a woman. Furthermore, some aspects of the relation between the nun and her confessor are subject to scandal. I will argue that the political context had changed and with it religious and aesthetic sensibility too. From 1750, an «enlightened» king, José I, reigned. Devotion must now be «regulated», not only in terms of what is heterodoxy, but also in terms of its verbal expression and of the new sensibility it conveys.

### Keywords

Gender; Baroque aesthetics; *Regolata devozione*; Material culture; Rhetorics

### Resumen

Cuando, en 1779, las monjas del convento de Louriçal dirigieron a la Real Mesa Censória una solicitud para imprimir las sesenta y dos cartas que la monja clarisa Joana do Louriçal había escrito a su confesor, quizás no esperaban que su proyecto se

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frustrara. Entre los problemas señalados, el sesgo de género y una nueva sensibilidad religiosa son dos de los más llamativos: la penitencia sangrienta provoca horror, los estigmas despiertan desconfianza y se consideran no aptos para una mujer. Además, algunos aspectos de la relación entre la monja y su confesor son objeto de escándalo. Argumentaré que el contexto político había cambiado y con él también la sensibilidad religiosa y estética. A partir de 1750 reinó un rey «ilustrado», D. José I. La devoción ahora tiene que ser «regulada», no sólo en cuanto a lo que es heterodoxia, sino también en cuanto a su expresión verbal y a la nueva sensibilidad que transmite.

### Palabras clave

Género; Estética barroca; *Regolata devozione*; Cultura material; Retórica

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## INTRODUCTION

For centuries, women writers in Europe were considered rare and less talented than their male counterparts. Writing was not considered a woman's occupation, and thus women who wrote were deemed anomalous or exceptional. In order to gain access to the realm of power associated with men, women writers developed interesting rhetorical ways of both claiming and dismissing authorship and *auctoritas*, which were studied, for example, by Alison Weber<sup>2</sup>. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the number of women writers, with published or handwritten work, increased. Convents were, by socio-cultural and religious reasons, a privileged place for the writings of nuns in such a way that Baranda Leturio and Marín Pina considered that the typical female early modern writer was a nun<sup>3</sup>.

In recent decades, new critical approaches to sources and new ways of doing History have released women from their historical silence and have contributed to develop Women's and Gender History as a disciplinary field<sup>4</sup>. Feminist and post-colonial approaches contributed to literary revisionism and to questioning romantic and positivist assumptions that ground the cultural construction of the western literary canon. Genres generally considered as minor or marginal, such as autobiographies, letters, circumstance poems, among others, started being studied under perspectives that no longer and exclusively praised aesthetics and literary quality. And with this, their female authors started getting more attention from scholars and gained legitimacy in the literary field.

Under this perspective, the letters written by Joana do Louriçal to her confessor may be considered as an example of literature<sup>5</sup> written by nuns during the Baroque. In addition, the *Life* of Joana is based on the same letters<sup>6</sup>, which undermines our postmodern concept of authorship and a notion as contemporary as intellectual property. Bearing this in mind, her biography could also be considered of her own authorship together with José Caetano de Sousa. In fact, both the letters and the biography have all the three characteristics pointed out by Gabriella Zarri as being constitutive of female monastic writing: *autorialità debole*, *parola autorizzata* and *scrittura comunitaria*<sup>7</sup>. They are both autobiographical stories

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2. Weber, 1990.

3. Baranda Leturio & Marín Pina, 2014: 11.

4. The project of a global Women's and Gender History, going beyond case studies and partial visions, is still lacking in Portuguese speaking worlds. As a disciplinary field, it is still struggling to get peer-to-peer recognition in Academia and evolving at the margin of it. See Pinto, (2015): 27-36. Despite certain research efforts (for example, the catalogue *Escritoras - Women writers in Portuguese before 1900* (<http://escritoras-em-portugues.eu/>), there is still not a global work, covering the different perspectives (monastic and secular), the different social strata and the different fields of sociability (private and social/community).

5. I am using the category of «literature» in a broad sense for academic diachronic purposes, although I am aware of the anachronism of this recent construct when applied to Early Modern writings. Contemporaries would have used the terms «writings» [*escritos*] or «papers» [*papéis*], which are not synonymous with literature.

6. About the porosity between the letters of Joana do Louriçal and her *Life*, the mediation of discourses, the reappropriations, and instances of legitimation between the private sphere and the public sphere, see Jacquet, (2017): 115-128.

7. Zarri, (2014): 52-54.

showing female networks and female agency and the circulation of texts inside and outside the convent<sup>8</sup>.

## 1. ON CONTEXTS

Joana do Louriçal was a Poor Clare nun from the Convent of the Most Blessed Sacrament of Louriçal, a novice in 1732 at the age of twenty. She died in 1754. Her biography, *Memórias da vida e virtudes da serva de Deus soror Maria Joana, religiosa do convento real do Santíssimo Sacramento do Louriçal da primeira Regra de S. Francisco*, volume in 4<sup>o</sup> of 323 pages, published in Lisbon by Miguel Rodrigues, was written by Brother José Caetano de Sousa. Brother José Caetano de Sousa was a Carmelite, Doctor of Theology by the University of Coimbra<sup>9</sup>, where he taught. He held important positions (such as member of the *Academia Litúrgica Pontifícia*) and published several works (mainly sermons). The Life of Maria Joana do Louriçal includes letters she had sent to her confessor, Father Luís da Costa Simões, some data taken from the informative process for her canonisation, the testimony of a nun and other unidentified documents<sup>10</sup>. The Life is preceded by a dedication written by the abbess and nuns of the Convent of the Blessed Sacrament, which is another example of *scrittura comunitaria*. This devout biography was published in 1762, during the reign of King José I, who is commonly considered the first king of the Portuguese Enlightenment, an enlightened despot<sup>11</sup>. It is dedicated to Maria Francisca, daughter of King José I and Mariana Vitória de Bourbon, Princess of Brazil, Duchess of Bragança and future Queen of Portugal from 1777, as Maria I<sup>12</sup>.

We do not have information on the reception of this Life between 1762 and 1779 but we do know that Joana do Louriçal was a well-known figure of Portuguese feminine spirituality of her time. After her death, the convent of Louriçal exhibited to popular devotion portraits, clothes, and instruments of mortification that she used. In a letter addressed to her confessor, Joana prophesied the earthquake which devastated Lisbon on November 1, 1755<sup>13</sup>. She thus reinforces the mirac-

8. Galhardo Couto, 2007.

9. Silva, 1860: 286.

10. «Escrevo a sua vida tirada dos melhores documentos, que servem de fundamento da história, e das suas cartas [...]. Outras notícias são extraídas fielmente do processo e informações que mandou tirar o excelentíssimo e reverendíssimo D. Miguel da Anunciação, bispo de Coimbra, obrigado dos extraordinários sucessos observados publicamente em seu corpo depois de sua morte. Outras notícias finalmente são dadas à força da obediência por uma religiosa do mesmo convento, que foi ocular íntima testemunha de suas ações». Sousa, 1762: 3-4.

11. On the very conflicted transition from a Baroque «world», embodied by King D. João V, to a Portugal of the Enlightenment, with all its contradictions, see the study by França, (1978): 167-177. A clear alliance between Enlightenment and politics coincided with the rise of Pombal, within the framework of the enlightened despotism of King José's reign. From a religious point of view, Christianity was not rejected, but discord arose related to the Jesuit issue and the opposition to Rome. Rationalism and modern philosophy, the renewal of sciences, new pedagogies and the reform of social and political institutions are some of the shared features of European Enlightenments. However, the Enlightenment offered peculiar signs in markedly Catholic areas, such as Italy, Spain and Portugal. Reformism and pedagogism did not, for example, have an anti-historical and irreligious attitude identical to that presented in France, where the rejection of all tradition was a condition for the construction of a new society. See Abreu, (2012): 32.

12. Queirós, 2021: 731.

13. Sousa, 1762: 225. A well-known prophecy referred by the Jesuit Gabriel Malagrida. See Marques, (2006): 277.

ulous founding story of the convent of Louriçal, whose beginnings could already count on the extraordinary aura of its founder, Mother Maria do Lado<sup>14</sup>. This is a perfect example of how mysticism and prophecy were one of the main forms that early modern feminine exemplarity assumed. Joana do Louriçal participates in reinforcing the symbolic identity of the convent and, ultimately, in preserving a sort of body-institution through her writings<sup>15</sup>.

In 1779, twenty-five years after the death of Joana and just at the beginning of the reign of Queen Maria I, in a context of institutional affirmation of the convent of Louriçal<sup>16</sup> where actions for the beatification of several nuns were tried, the nuns of the convent of Louriçal addressed to the *Real Mesa Censória*<sup>17</sup> a request<sup>18</sup> to print the sixty-two letters that the Poor Clare nun Joana do Louriçal had written to her confessor and director of conscience. In the censorship document dating from 1779 and written in the first person singular, it was decided, at first, to let the letters be printed, provided that they were corrected in the points explained in the same document<sup>19</sup> because the most serious aspects, which are found in the letters, and which could embarrass their publication, were already public in the Life of Joana<sup>20</sup>. The author of the censorship is Friar Joaquim de S. Ana e Silva, the first of the three signatories<sup>21</sup>. As the historian Rui Tavares pointed out<sup>22</sup>, it was customary at the *Real Mesa Censória* that the drafting deputy (in other words, the censor of each text) presented his decision at a plenary meeting in court, which normally took place twice a week. The report in question consisted of a handwritten text, signed by the censor, then confirmed by two other deputies, the censors' adjuvants, or coadjutors. However, despite the first positive opinion by Friar Joaquim de S. Ana e Silva, in the following paragraph, the *Mesa* claims the deletion of the letters<sup>23</sup>. The refusal of publication of the letters is all the more surprising given that the censor who first signs the report of the *Real Mesa Censória*, Friar Joaquim de S. Ana<sup>24</sup>, religious

14. The nun would have seen in a revelation the desecration of the Blessed Sacrament which occurred at the church of Santa Engrácia, in Lisbon, in 1630. It is this event which would be at the origin of the foundation of the convent of Desagravo do Louriçal, the word *desagravo* meaning reparation for this grave offense against God.

15. Queirós, 2021: 47.

16. Jacquinet, 2014: 133-134.

17. Created on April 5, 1768, under King José I, with the aim of transferring to the State the totality and exclusivity of the procedure for taxing works for publication or disclosure, until then under the responsibility of the Tribunal of the Holy Office, the *Desembargo do Paço* and the Ordinary of the *diocese*. On the *Real Mesa Censória*, see Martins, 2005.

18. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folios.

19. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «é o meu parecer que emendadas as passagens sobre as quais se fizeram os ditos reparos se dê licença para a estampa das ditas cartas e suas reflexões. Porém antes das sobreditas emendas e licença é mais conforme ao vosso regimento se dê vista ao Autor das reflexões dos reparos que acima ficam feitos».

20. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «os objectos de maior gravidade, que se têm nas ditas cartas, e que poderiam embarçar a sua publicação já correm públicos na vida desta religiosa».

21. The other two deputies are Pedro Viegas de Novais and Friar Francisco de S. Ana e Fonseca.

22. «Comme il était de mise à la Real Mesa Censória, le député rédacteur (autrement dit, le censeur de chaque texte en particulier) présentait sa décision lors d'une réunion plénière au tribunal, qui avait normalement lieu deux fois par semaine. Le rapport en question consistait en un texte manuscrit, signé par le censeur, puis confirmé par deux autres députés, les censeurs 'coadjuvantes' ou 'coadjutores', les adjoints». See Tavares, 2013: 63.

23. ANTT, Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «Assentou porém a Mesa e foi de parecer que as sobreditas cartas ficassem suprimidas».

24. He accumulated prestigious titles: Doctor of Theology from the Universities of Coimbra and Évora,

of Saint Paul the First Hermit, was already in 1762 one of the *qualificadores* of the tribunal of the Holy Office who had seen nothing contrary to the Christian faith<sup>25</sup> in the *Memórias da vida e virtudes da serva de Deus soror Maria Joana*, which are based on the content of the letters. On the contrary, he applauds the virtues and penitential spirit of Joana do Louriçal and affirms that her Life contains nothing that offends Catholic Faith, nor good morals.

## 2. THE RHETORIC OF EXCLUSION. REGULATING DEVOTION: JOANA DO LOURIÇAL

Several faults are pointed out in the censorship document of 1779: the lack of quality of the letters if compared to those of Saint Teresa of Ávila, poor logical organisation and style issues, the lack of modesty and the lack of intention of the author in publishing them. But apart from these formal and moral issues, which lead to think that style is as important as content, there are other problems related to the way in which Joana intended to reach God and the nature of spiritual direction in this path.

### 2.1. EMBODYING A BLOODY FAITH

Let us analyse the censor's criticism related to the new religious regulated sensibility. One of the complaints is about the extraordinary spiritual experience of Maria Joana. The censor begins by alluding to her harsh and amazing penances, which seem not to fit her weak, and delicate sex<sup>26</sup>, implying that he had doubts about them or that they exceeded reasonable bounds, in other words, the very limits of a gendered organisation of the world.

He will again criticise Joana's penances and the idea she had that the only way to reach God would be through penances, which the censor refutes considering that this is a wrong concern of Maria Joana because it is not impossible to find God by any other way than that of the harsh and rigorous penances<sup>27</sup>.

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qualifier for the Holy Office, consultant to the tribunal of the Bull of the Crusade, examiner of military orders, and member of the Pontifical Liturgical Academy etc. See TAVARES, 2013: 187. He was part of the first group of censors of the *Real Mesa Censória*, having been appointed in April 1768 extraordinary deputy and, in 1772, ordinary deputy. On November 27, 1772, he was appointed deputy of the *Junta da Fazenda da arrecadação do Subsídio Literário*. He 'survived' the extinction of the *Real Mesa*, following the reform of Queen Maria I, in 1787, and retained his position as censor of the *Real Comissão Geral para o Exame e Censura dos Livros*. Finally, he was still in office when the institution was reformed again in the direction of triple censorship, in 1794. In total, he accompanied the censorship of writing for thirty-six years. See «No papel de leitor: a censura a romances nos séculos XVIII e XIX» [online], by Márcia Abreu. [Accessed 27 jun. 2022]. Available at < [http://www.ufrgs.br/gthistoriaculturalrs/marcia\\_abreu.html](http://www.ufrgs.br/gthistoriaculturalrs/marcia_abreu.html)>.

25. «[nada] que offenda a nossa Fé, nem os bons costumes, a julgo muito digna». Sousa, 1762: unnumbered page (Licenças do Santo Ofício).

26. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «suas asperrimas, e pasmosas penitencias, que parece não cabião no seu fraco, e delicado sexo».

27. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «huma errada preocupação de Maria Joana; porque não he impossivel achar a Deos por outro caminho diferente do das asperas, e rigorosas penitencias».

Another paragraph discusses the frightening and perhaps unorthodox rigour of a discipline that Joana applied herself without stopping, without fatigue, the whole body bloodied, the blood flowing for a long time and accumulating on the ground in such quantities that she could take it with both hands<sup>28</sup>. The censor asks himself whether one would be able to do such penance without putting at stake one's own Salvation and without offending the Laws of Charity<sup>29</sup>. He adds that horror filled him when he read that passage of her letters.

The following statement helps to understand the distrust of the censor [«bem fundada suspeita»] regarding Joana's story. The core of the matter is the impression of the wounds of Jesus Christ in the body of Joana, a grace so important that, objects the censor, the Lord had not granted it for twelve centuries. He adds ironically that, since Saint Francis had it, there have been several cases of devout people claiming to have also received it. The censor does not seem to question the honesty of the nun's convictions; however, he leaves implicit that perhaps Joana needed a better direction of spirit allowing to discern whether they would be true illustrations or deceptive illusions<sup>30</sup>.

## 2.2. EXPRESSING FAITH: DOCTRINE, MORALS, AND STYLE

Several reproaches are pointed on the doctrinal, moral, and the verisimilitude of certain reflections of Maria Joana that the censor corrects word by word. This point raises again the question of a direction of consciousness which was perhaps not very careful. The doctrinal problems consist, first of all, in the affirmation that Joana had renounced all spiritual things and even glory, which the censor refutes by saying that it is impossible to renounce the object of Christian emulation<sup>31</sup>. Then, he shows himself again scandalised that Joana could compare the lack that the absence of the confessor produces in her to the absence of God. According to him,

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28. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «escreve Maria Joana o seguinte: = Estive tão forte em quanto tomei a disciplina que dando com toda a alma, coração e forças, como se desse em a mais dura pedra, não para o sentimento, que era grande; nunca cancei, nem foi necessario descançar o braço, parecia de ferro; todo o corpo ficou feito sangue sem parar de correr muito tempo; depois emté mãos, e braços, e o mais corpo corria em tanta abundancia na terra que podia às mãos cheias apanhalo; quando acabei pedaços tão grandes que se podião cortar etc = Enchi-me de horror, quando li a sobredita passagem».

29. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «Pensava [...] se poderia praticar com segurança da propria consciencia sem ofender as Leys da propria Charidade».

30. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «e manifesta os sobrenaturaes, e extraordinarios favores, que recebera do Ceo, posto que ela mesma pergunta repetidas vezes ao seu director se serião verdadeiras illustrações, ou illusões enganosas. Entre os sobreditos favores declara a impressão das chagas que Jesu Chr.to lhe imprimira em seu corpo. Graça esta que o mesmo Senhor não concedeo por doze seculos a algum dos seus Santos, e maiores amigos; e depois do tempo de S. Francisco, que foi o primeiro, que mereceo este favor, são muitas as pessoas devotas, que tambem o querem ter recebido, o que faz entrar os homens prudentes, e [illegible word] em huma bem fundada suspeita, se prevalecerá o engano, se a illusão».

31. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «nas regras seguras da Teologia Mística não cabe a renuncia de todas as cousas espirituaes, nem o despir o affecto à mesma glória. Quem pode renunciar os actos de Fé, e Esperança e Charidade, e ainda os das outras virtudes, e o propósito de encher os preceitos divinos, e os da Igreja; que todas estas cousas são espirituaes. [...] E poderá hum christão despir-se do affecto de ser a casa de Deos em q habita Jesus Chr.to pela Fé, e Esperança de possuir a gloria do Céu?»

Joana should have torn up this letter because its content is «unworthy, scandalous and blasphemous»<sup>32</sup>.

Afterwards, what holds the attention of the censor is the question of obedience to God and to the spiritual director. The censor criticises Joana for her shocking and offensive words<sup>33</sup>. It is about the style of expression (probably too familiar and sloppy), but it is above all a question of *decorum* and, once again, of a *discretio spirituum* which is lacking in Joana, and therefore, is lacking in Joana's director of conscience. According to the censor, in the uncertainty of the speaker being God or not, obedience to the director is essential; however, when we are sure that it is God who speaks, we must obey him and ignore the director.

In another paragraph, the censor expresses his doubts about a passage in Joana's letters where she claims that the demon would have taken the shape of God in the figure of the sacrament. He considers this statement untruthful, fictitious, and unlikely [«menos verdadeira», «ficticios e inverosimeis»] because, according to him, the Lord will never allow the devil to take the figure of the great holy Sacrament to deceive and delude souls. Even if the censor does not judge Joana's intentions (is it a lie, is it self-suggestion?), the polarisation between *illusão* and *engano* appears three times in his report. The word *illusão* refers directly to the inquisitorial grammar where the *ilusos* were often accused of heretical doctrinal faults.

On another occasion, he spots another inconsistency in Joana, who does not seem to distinguish whether she was in mental prayer or in dreams<sup>34</sup>. The commentary of the censor is implacable and does not admit what may be a figurative use of the verb *acordar* (to wake up). In another paragraph it will be again a question of Joana's style of expression. Joana writes in one of her letters that she understood that she was being told to also join some part of her blood with that of the Lord<sup>35</sup> and, in order to do so, she inflicted herself a discipline until her will of embracing the pain of Christ was fulfilled. She is criticised by the censor who writes that sublime objects do not admit figurative phrases, because they are all dangerous, bad-sounding, and scandalous<sup>36</sup>. Showing indulgence, however, he claims to know what Joana means.

Then, it is again Joana's style that shocks. She writes that «A parte inferior [...] não sente aquelles lambuger de devoção e ternura». The word *lambuger* is, according to the censor, a ridiculous and childish word applied to an object of

32. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «dá conta Maria Joana ao seu confessor do muito, que ella sentira a falta do mesmo confessor, que por alguns dias estivera fora da sua residencia, e diz assim: = Senti huma falta tão grande dentro da alma, que só com a do mesmo Deos se pode comparar. Admiro-me como o tal confessor não rasgou esta carta, para que ja mais aparecesse: que indigna, escandalosa e blasfema comparação da falta de huma creatura com a falta de hum Deos summo, e infinito bem!»

33. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «Continua Maria Joana dizendo: = Eu respondi não o heide fazer sem o conselho do meu confessor, ainda que tenha a certeza de ter dobrados infernos; mais quero condemnarme por obediencia, que salvar-me por semelhantes direcções, ainda que sejam do mesmo Deos =. Estas proposições em seos mesmos termos são mal soantes, e offensivas dos pios ouvidos».

34. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «esta noite na oração sonhei [...] Eu senti muito, e quando acordei».

35. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «Entendi que me dizião que juntasse também alguma parte do meu sangue com o do Senhor».

36. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «Este e outros objectos tão sublimes não admittem locuções figuradas, porque todas são perigosas, mal soantes e escandalosas».

such seriousness<sup>37</sup>. Joana's sentence, although taken out of context, means, in my opinion, that the non-noble parts of the body did not participate in the effects of the Lord's love and, in this sense, did not experience the gratification<sup>38</sup> associated to it. The censor is horrified by this ridiculous and childish use. Is this remark a misogynistic one as to convey a womanlike use of words? However, I don't know if we should attribute its use to Joana's naivety or to her supposed childishness. Wouldn't it rather be a demonstration of great freedom of speech that disturbs the censor?

In fact, in another paragraph the censor is surprised by Joana's use of the word *óbice*. According to him, Joana could not know this word because it is part of a grammar of theologians<sup>39</sup>. It is noteworthy that he does not assert that the use of the word is erroneous. The censor was probably unaware that, before she entered the convent, she had lived for several years with her uncle in Coimbra, who was a university professor, theologian from the same university and the cantor of the cathedral<sup>40</sup>. In any case, the surprise of the censors in relation to the knowledge displayed by the nuns is recurrent, even when socialization with theologians is part of the informal education of nuns<sup>41</sup>. The misogynistic distrust of the censor demarcates the boundaries of professionals of Religion who are, by definition, men, and women, who can only claim a very framed experience of Religion.

### 3. THE RHETORIC OF EXCLUSION. REGULATING SPIRITUAL DIRECTION: FATHER JOSÉ CAETANO

#### 3.1. SENSE AND (A NEW) SENSIBILITY

In other paragraphs, the censor comments on Brother José Caetano's reflections on Joana's letters. I was struck by the content of the first of the criticisms that the censor made of him. What is it about? It is about the use of fans by women during religious services. Why would it take on sufficient importance to be included in one of the censorship paragraphs? Let's get to the facts. Brother José Caetano expressed

37. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «redicula palavra, e puerilm.te applicada a objecto de tanta seriedade».

38. The word gave me problems reading it, especially the first letter. Then I discovered variations of it such as *lambuja*, *lambujem*, *lambujeiro* that, while referring etymologically to gluttony, have acquired a sense of advantage (in the game) or more generally of gratification, as also *lambidela*. In fact, there is a whole euphemistic vocabulary in Portuguese today meaning «gratification» that revolves around food or meals: *adiafa* or *diafa*, *beberete*, *café*, *gorjeta*, *maquia*, *mata-bicho*, *molhadela*, *molhadura* and *queijada*. See «Gratificação», (2003): 1919.

39. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «Admirei-me de ler aquelle termo obice, que sendo facultativo, e proprio dos Theeologos, como faz deste uso Maria Joana sem ter lição dos livros de Theologia».

40. Her uncle, António da Cruz Ferreira, was also one of the ministers of the Third Order of Saint Francis, in Coimbra, which highlights family connections to the Franciscan order and makes it possible to guess a certain preference for the convent of Lourçal. This element also makes it possible to see the strategy of personal and spiritual promotion through a renowned institution of the city, where local elites met (Queirós, 2021: 76). In 1745, her uncle lived in a good two-story house, with kitchen, courtyard, stable, barn and an oratory, belonging to the cathedral chapter, to which he had the right for life. See Mota, (2015): 326. Even if it cannot be said that her uncle had a kind of clientelistic relationship with Cardinal Da Motta, he had known him in Evora. See Sousa, 1762:29-30.

41. Lavrin, 2014: 68.

in his comment to one of Maria Joana's letters that he was scandalised by the use of fans by the «devout sex» during the Divine Office, which, according to him, is not edifying. The phrase used by Brother José Caetano is:

And it would be very edifying if all Souls, especially of the so-called devout sex, conspired to banish from the churches and houses of the Lord, not only the conversations and criminal curiosities from their eyes, but mainly the use or abuse of fans in the most serious religious offices<sup>42</sup>.

Caetano's remarks are as misogynist as they could possibly be as they are based on classic aspects of hatred towards women: conversations and curiosity by the gaze, to which he adds the use of fans. On the other hand, the censor's review says the following:

I cannot reach the moral dissonance that has the use of fans in the offices of religion that the aforementioned Father bewilders and reproaches: I know that there is a comfort as necessary in the women who gather in the temples on many occasions as a tight squeeze, and if they had not that relief, transports and fainting would be repeated, as has been experienced many times; I also know that even people of the highest quality and of great probity make use of it. And I finally know that the most sensible and even pious men do not conceive of scandal, nor does the aforesaid use still in temples cause them weirdness, so that although preachers declaim against immodest and indecent ornament, I have not yet heard them declaim against fans<sup>43</sup>.

The arguments of the censor are varied: convenience and necessity of sex, prevention and prophylaxis against facts attested by experience, social rank, social peace, and morals. I will not go so far as to say that the reply of the censor constitutes a defence of women; on the other hand, he puts a little common sense into remarks that are factiously oriented against women, and which do not consider the material conditions in which they attend divine worship. The nature of the arguments emphasises something which is at the level of the ideological and that comes from the desire for social harmony and reason, as we will see further down in the text.

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42. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «E bem edificativo seria se todas as Almas, principalm.te do sexo chamado devoto, conspirassem para desterrar das igrejas e casas do Senhor, não só as conversações, e curiosidades criminaes de suas vistas, mas principalmente o uso, ou abuso dos leques nos officios mais serios da Religião».

43. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «Eu não posso alcançar a moral dissonancia que tem o uso dos leques nos officios da religião que o referido P.e tanto estranha e reprehende: Sei que he huma commodidade como necessaria nas mulheres que se juntão nos templos em muitas occasiões como summo aperto, e q se não tivessem aquelle desafogo, serião repetidos os transportes e os desmaios como m.tas vezes se tem experimentado; Sei tambem que delle fazem uso ainda as pessoas de maior qualidade e de m.ta probidade. E sei finalm.te q os homes mais cordatos e ainda pios não concebem escandalo, nem lhes causa estranheza o sobredito uso ainda nos templos, de forma q declamando os pregadores contra o ornato immodesto, e indecente, ainda não ouvi que declamasse algum contra os ditos leques.»

But let's pay close attention to the censor's last sentence on this point. According to him, Father José Caetano's declaration is more the result of enthusiasm than of good reason<sup>44</sup>. A first-degree interpretation, close to the meaning that the word «enthusiasm» has today, would be in appearance satisfactory. However, it turns out that there is nothing innocent in this word, which acquires in this context an accusatory colour because indeed enthusiastic was synonymous with mystical, of course, in the negative connotation that the word had in the mouth of the protestants<sup>45</sup>. Is it a question of a demarcation of distances from a past of baroque and mystical faith that we want to be definitively over? But «enthusiast» was also assimilated to Jansenist. Is it an accusation of Jansenism?<sup>46</sup> What's the meaning of the use of the pejorative term «enthusiasm» by the Catholic censor? The chronology is not completely clear because we are just in the second year of the reign of Queen Maria I, whose action was more pious than her father's and who supported again the influence of the Church and of high nobility on the state. It is highly probable that the machinery of government from the previous reign is still prevailing. In this sense, it is not probable that «enthusiast» means «Jansenist» here because many policies or agents of Pombal during the reign of King José I were in fact Jansenist.

### 3.2. EXPRESSING FAITH: DOCTRINE, MORALS, AND STYLE

Much of the censor's comments are based on aspects of a problematic expression of Father José Caetano that could arise, with potential errors against the Catholic faith. This is the case, for example, of a sentence where Father José Caetano makes use of the conjunction *se* [if]. The censor criticises him because the use of this conjunction implies doubt whereas the love of God is not subject to hesitation or

44. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «a sua declaração he filha do mais do entusiasmo q da boa rasao.»

45. «Enthouasiastes. Beaucoup de protestants modernes comprennent sous ce nom tous ceux qui, dans le christianisme, furent, ou se crurent, l'objet de faveurs particulières de Dieu, et dirigèrent leur vie, non seulement d'après les enseignements, communs à tous les chrétiens, de l'Écriture et de l'Église, mais d'après les inspirations miraculeuses qu'ils reçurent, ou crurent recevoir, du ciel. Sont ainsi rangés parmi les enthousiastes, dans un gracieux pêle-mêle, à la suite des prophètes d'Israel, les apôtres et saint Paul en particulier, tous les mystiques de la primitive Église, du moyen âge et des temps modernes, orthodoxes aussi bien qu'hérétiques; sainte Thérèse et la B. Marguerite-Marie sont des enthousiastes comme les camisards et les quakers. [...] D'ordinaire, le mot est pris dans un sens péjoratif et désigne ceux qui, sous prétexte d'inspirations directes de Dieu, se dérobent à la direction des autorités spirituelles. [...] En théologie, on a parfois appelé enthousiastes les mystiques ou fanatiques qui se fondent sur une lumière intérieure pour négliger les enseignements de l'Écriture sainte». De Laservière, (1913): 129-130.

46. «le jansénisme [...] est un courant tridentin de la pensée catholique. Dans ce courant, on peut identifier certains aspects marquants. En ce qui concerne la théologie, le jansénisme s'est largement caractérisé par l'adoption d'un augustinisme 'radical'. [...] on peut dire que pour les augustiniens (jansénistes) l'homme est sauvé par la grâce de Dieu. [...] touché par la grâce, l'homme devient libre pour accomplir des œuvres bonnes et méritoires. Au contraire, sans avoir la grâce, il est esclave du péché. [...] Au contraire du jansénisme français qui a une histoire profondément marquée par des conflits avec le pouvoir royal, le jansénisme portugais se développe avec la bienveillance du pouvoir royal portugais à l'époque de José I (1750-1777) et de son tout-puissant ministre, Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, plus connu par son dernier titre de noblesse, Marquis de Pombal. En effet, les jansénistes portugais sont très proches des cercles du pouvoir et, dans plusieurs cas, impliqués directement dans le processus de réformes mis en place par le gouvernement de José I et de son Premier Ministre. Cette participation active des jansénistes à l'élaboration des politiques gouvernementales explique, dans une large mesure, le fort penchant régaliste du jansénisme portugais.» See Sales Souza, 2009.

doubt. Instead of the conditional clause, he proposes a new sentence: «being the Love of God»<sup>47</sup>. The censor will criticise again Caetano's use of a conditional clause to express God's ability to hear one's prayers which cannot be doubted<sup>48</sup>.

In another paragraph, the question is even more problematic from a doctrinal point of view. Brother José Caetano's words present two problems, clearly identified by the censor. As for the first of these problematic passages, it consists of an affirmation which would mean that the Grace of God has degrees, which go from more to less. Caetano writes that even those most confirmed in Grace can sin venially [«ainda os mais confirmados em Graça podem peccar venialm.te»]. The censor's comment shows a certain lassitude. The passage is so problematic that he is himself obliged to advance by gradation, from the less serious doctrinaire attack to faith to the most serious:

I no longer notice those first words = the most confirmed in Grace =; as if confirmation in the Grace of the Lord were a quality gradually understandable, and remissible, which admits of greater or lesser intention: Confirmation in Grace is an indivisible object of being, or not being, which in no way can admit more and less<sup>49</sup>.

But the worst is yet to come. The heart of the problem is the question of free will. Without ever referring to it directly, a conception according to which man is solely dependent on divine Grace is heterodox and comparable to Lutheranism or Jansenism. Let's see the excerpt in question:

Father [José Clemente] did not speak here as the Theologian: if those who are confirmed in Grace cannot sin seriously and lose the same Grace, they do not deserve to observe the divine precepts because as they cannot sin seriously, they cannot transgress, and they observe the said precepts for an intrinsic strength and necessity. And lacking freedom for transgression, they also lack merit. [...] However, they have all the principles of freedom to sin, to belittle, and to lose their Grace [...]<sup>50</sup>.

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47. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «Em boa Filosofia a particula se for[m]a proposição condicional: e esta por sua natureza deixa em duvida a sua verdade e não pode haver duvida alguma de que o Amor de Deos seja como diz o Apostolo S. Paulo = Logo não disse m.to bem o escritor escrevendo = se o Amor de Deos he como diz o Apostolo =; melhor dissera e assim devera escrever: = que sendo o Amor de Deos, como diz o Apostolo etc.»

48. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «temos outra similhante passagem do Author, que diz assim: [...] e se he certo que quem a estes ouve, a Deos ouve etc. = Devera dizer: = E sendo certo que quem a estes ouve, a Deos ouve».

49. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «Eu ja não reparo naquellas primeiras palavras = os mais confirmados em Graça=; como se a confirmação na Graça do Senhor fosse qualidade gradualm.te intendivel, e remissivel, que admitisse maior ou menor intensão: A confirmação em Graça he hum objecto indivisivel de ser, ou não ser, que de nenhum modo pode admittir mais e menos».

50. ANTT. Real Mesa Censória, cx. 11, ms. 49, unnumbered folio: «Aqui não fallou o P.e M. e como Theologo: se os que estão confirmados em Graça não podem peccar gravemente e perder a mesma Graça não tem merecimento na observancia dos divinos preceitos porque como não podem peccar gravemente não podem transgredir, e observão os ditos preceitos por huma intrinseca força e necessidade. E faltando-lhe a liberdade para a transgreção, tambem lhes falta o merecimento. [...] Porem elles tem todos os principios de liberdade para peccar, desmerecer, e perder a Graça [...].»

The censor twice emphasises the issue of freedom, without which there is no merit. It is ultimately an echo of the question of salvation through good works, that one would be mistaken to think that it was definitively closed in the middle of the Age of Enlightenment. Jansenism, perfectly in tune with the times, will take care of reviving the question of the Grace of salvation, regardless of man's merits.

Would this doctrinaire aspect, mixed with the very harsh penances of Joana, have made one think of a Jansenising spiritual direction? This is a difficult hypothesis to support because, as it is not sure that the word «enthusiasm» is here synonymous with Jansenist and because several deputies of the *Real Mesa Censória* had a Jansenist inclination. The political project of Carvalho e Melo has indeed favoured the publication of several treatises where the Jansenist inspiration is palpable<sup>51</sup>. This perspective could perhaps reverse the question: if so, why would the censor be interested in correcting the passage?

The analysis of historian Rui Tavares seems very fair to me when he states that the term 'Jansenist' had existed for just over a hundred years at the time of the *Real Mesa Censória* and, openly or more discreetly, no censor was unaware of its meaning, and all knew the effect which the word could achieve. Suspicions of Jansenism hovered over some deputies of the institution, while others (probably for that very reason) dedicated their efforts not to be associated with it<sup>52</sup>. What is clear is this desire to correct a member of the clergy in his doctrinaire missteps, even if, as is the case with the latter, his misstep was in tune with the times, even with some of the Mesa members. By correcting, one strengthens the institutional role of the *Real Mesa Censória* in the «regulated devotion», inspired by Ludovico Muratori.

## CONCLUSIONS

Despite the opinion of Brother Joaquim de S. Ana, which is quite fatalistic because he recognises that a large part of the «errors» of the letters are already circulating in the Life, the final opinion of the *Mesa* clearly insinuates that the times are no longer for baroque mortifications, nor for the mysticism that goes with it, nor for outward manifestations of piety. Consequently, the penances of Maria Joana, although exacerbated, did not shock sensitivities in 62, but they would be the object of deep disgust in 79. All wanted to be Saints Teresas and Saints Francis, but not all can be. Joana's body performance of the female religious body is no longer up to date: misogynistic prejudices limit Joana to her sex; bloody penance provokes horror; stigmata arouse mistrust.

It also demonstrates that the times have come for a greater doctrinal requirement and, consequently, for an adequate spiritual direction and training of the clergy to

51. Paiva, 2006: 535.

52. «Le terme 'janséniste' existait depuis un peu plus de cent ans à l'époque de la *Real Mesa Censória* et, ouvertement ou de manière plus discrète, pas un censeur n'ignorait sa signification, et tous connaissaient l'effet que le mot pouvait atteindre. Des soupçons de jansénisme planaient sur certains députés de l'institution, tandis que d'autres (sans doute pour cela même) dédiaient leurs efforts à ne pas y être associés». Tavares, 2013: 279-280.

counter illusion and deception. Isn't that the conclusion that can be drawn from the corrections of the censorship? The Enlightened faith was no longer about ambiguities; its agents and interpreters are there to make sure of that. Faith is as important as the expression of what devotion is or should be. The *Life*, which is based on the content of these letters the nuns want to publish in 1779, managed to pass through the sieve of the *Mesa* in 1762, but the letters which it integrates are no longer up to date seventeen years later, even though technically 1779 already represents the reign of Queen Maria I.

The passage of the fans is much more than a *fait divers*. The dispute over the use of fans by ladies during the Divine Office will push the consequences of this new enlightened faith far and wide. Who would indeed believe that fans could be the pretext of considerations on the charisma of someone? This amalgamation strategy polarises the camps with the followers of the enlightened faith. Different opinions on the use of fans during the Divine Office hide and show, at the same time, different political and religious ideologies and invite historians to consider the storytelling laying down material culture. It is the proof by a small note which could pass unnoticed that times have changed and that one wants to display one's adhesion to the new times by all the means which are enlightening at the level of morals, as well as at the level of language and the concepts it expresses.

What is very interesting to note here is the effect of timelines and sensibilities on hesitations. Between 1762 and 1779, the political context had changed and with it religious and social sensibilities. This case illustrates well how contexts and chronologies can be decisive for the publication of a book (of two books) in the long eighteenth century. Content analysis, close reading and lexicographical analysis show the power of chronologies and institutional rhetoric to better grasp the stakes of a *life/Life* when the chessboard of political-religious variables changes.

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