

Sensory Experiences and the Construction of Space in the Early Reign of Queen Maria Carolina of Naples-Sicily

Abstract: This article explores the construction of spaces through the senses of Maria Carolina, queen of Naples-Sicily. The rotation of courtly and private life between different environs of the Neapolitan capital region created frequent spatial change in the life of Maria Carolina between 1768 and 1799 – the period from her arrival as queen consort in Naples to the moment of her first flight from revolutionary outbreak. Her royal progresses throughout the environment around the city of Naples, routinely visiting various palaces and residences, allows for an analysis of sensory factors in the evolution of a spatial hierarchy for the queen. Regular movement between these places, it is argued, enabled a particular association with each space defined largely by positive and negative remembrances of the senses. In addition, her mobility included imagined journeys through the sensation of object perception and recalling sensory memories associated with such items. In discussing these aspects of her awareness and mobility, the relationship between sensory experience and spatial practice becomes a clear factor within the functionality of early modern courts.

Key Words: Naples, queenship, mobility, travel, spatial history, senses, Maria Carolina, eighteenth century

The Habsburg queen of Naples, Maria Carolina (1752–1814), was an extremely mobile woman. In many ways, mobility defined her life.¹ It was one complete circle

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1 Research for this article resulted from the project “Changing Social Representations of Political Order ca. 1800. Governmental Concepts in the Correspondence of Maria Carolina of Naples-Sicily”,

from her relocation to Naples at the age of sixteen upon her marriage to the Bourbon King Ferdinand of Naples-Sicily (1751–1825) in 1768 to their escape twice from revolutionary overthrows in Naples to her own eventual exile from British-occupied Sicily to her final days spent on the outskirts of Vienna in 1814. Measured against the mobility of her contemporaries, Maria Carolina kept remarkable pace.² Her more famous sister Marie Antoinette, for example, barely ventured beyond the confines of Versailles and Paris until her failed flight to Varennes.³ Twice Maria Carolina progressed from Naples to the Holy Roman Empire: once over land to arrange auspicious marriages for her children and to attend the imperial coronation of her sibling Leopold II in the Imperial Free City of Frankfurt in 1790 and again to Vienna in 1800. Yet even during spells of relative personal stagnation, she was on the move. A typical week for her could involve attending the court in Naples, daily trips around the city, accompanying her husband for lunch on the coast, evenings in a theatre, and moving to another palace in the countryside on the weekends.⁴ Her local travel was also highly personal in nature: relocating to the more refreshing coastline and retreating to the city to attend certain events. Triple exile from Naples did not slow the queen down. On Sicily, she toured the island in order to examine the kingdom for herself, and in Vienna, she oscillated between the palaces of Schönbrunn and the Hofburg as well as her own accommodation at Schloss Hetzendorf.⁵ Renowned initially for her reformist zeal and then later her reactionary conservatism, Maria Carolina's dynamism was both a mental and physical attribute.

This article focuses upon Maria Carolina's sensual experiences which she developed by association within her localized regime of travel in and around Naples. The

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- 2 Maria Carolina's own journeys are best covered by Egon Caesar Conte Corti, *Ich, eine Tochter Maria Theresias. Ein Lebensbild der Königin Marie Karoline von Neapel*, München 1950, 41–54, 173–178, 324–395, and to some extent by Elisabetta De Santi Gentili, *Il viaggio della regina Maria Carolina d'Asburgo da Vienna a Napoli nel 1768. Il passaggio nella Toscana*, in: *Biblioteca e società* 24/3–4 (2005), 56–62; for comparison to her brother Joseph II, see Derek E. D. Beales, *Joseph II, vol. 1: In the Shadow of Maria Theresa, 1741–1780*, Cambridge 1987, 242–271, 338–343, 366–385; Annie Henwood, *L'empereur Joseph II à la découverte de le marine et de la France de l'Ouest (juin 1777)*, in: *Annales de Bretagne et des pays de l'Ouest* 91/4 (1984), 351–368; Jacques Cart, *Le voyage de l'empereur Joseph II en Suisse en 1777*, in: *Revue historique vaudoise* 4/10 (1896), 289–301.
- 3 Munro Price, *The Road from Versailles. Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, and the Fall of the French Monarchy*, New York 2004, 27.
- 4 Cinzia Recca, *Structural Physiognomy, Historical Value of Diaries and the Daily Routine of the Queen*, in: *idem, The Diary of Queen Maria Carolina of Naples, 1781–1785. New Evidence of Queenship at Court*, London 2017, 19–42.
- 5 Antonino Cutrera, *La reazione dei Borboni in Sicilia nel 1799*, in: *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento* 28 (1931), 268–295.

rotation of courtly and private life between different environs of the Neapolitan capital region created frequent spatial change in the life of Maria Carolina between her arrival in 1768 to 1799, the beginning of her first exile. This period of continual and repetitive movement internally within the Kingdom of Naples-Sicily gave rise to a spatial hierarchy for the queen. This hierarchy resulted from the sensorial imprints which she developed of the places she visited.⁶ In other words, as she moved from place to place, palace to palace, she ascribed certain sensory characteristics to her habitation. Sensory memory – that is remembering through the senses – has been well defined in having several modalities corresponding to a number of senses which provide the stimulus for memory recall: iconic memory (stimulated from vision), echoic memory (hearing), and haptic memory (touch).⁷ Movement between spaces can heighten the perception of a sensory experience and repeated translocation between spaces imbued with specific sensory inputs establishes associations by the perceiver. In the case of Maria Carolina, sensorial imprints resulted in large part from her alternation among royal residences in and around Naples. By focusing on how sensory memory relates to spatial perception, this article reconstructs the spatial preferences of the queen of Naples-Sicily and builds towards a historicization of courtly tastes according to the senses.

Studies have stressed the structural and cultural differences between various European princely courts.⁸ Although European elites followed similar patterns of consumption and shared broad artistic tastes, the spaces in which they inhabited were unique. Power structures based on monarchical access, protocol dictates, and spiritual observance shaped courtly lifestyles. Physical locations defined the extent and limitations of these factors. Scholars are increasingly aware of how court space itself became an instrument for the symbolic display of authority or the mediator

6 Sensorial imprints relate to the ongoing work into the correlation between the senses and synaptic memory. For an interesting consideration of the relation between sensorial memory and historical investigation within the context of sensory cultural theory, see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Cinema Screen as Prosthesis of Perception. A Historical Account*, in: C. Nadia Seremetakis (ed.), *The Senses Still. Perception and Memory as Material Culture in Modernity*, Boulder 1994, 23–44.

7 Gabriel A. Radvansky, *Human Memory*, 3rd edition, New York/London 2017, 106; some of the most important studies are: Christopher J. Darwin/Michael T. Turvey/Robert C. Crowder, *An Auditory Analogue of the Sperling Partial Report Procedure. Evidence for Brief Auditory Storage*, in: *Cognitive Psychology* 3 (1972), 255–267; Arthur O. Dick, *Iconic Memory and Its Relation to Perceptual Processing and Other Memory Mechanisms*, in: *Perception & Psychophysics* 16 (1974), 575–596; John W. Hill/James C. Bliss, *Modelling a Tactile Sensory Register*, in: *Perception & Psychophysics* 4 (1968), 91–101; Alberto Gallace/Hong Z. Tan/Charles Spence, *Multisensory Numerosity Judgments for Visual and Tactile Stimuli*, in: *Perception & Psychophysics* 69 (2007), 487–501.

8 Most prominent are John Adamson (ed.), *The Princely Courts of Europe. Ritual, Politics and Culture under the Ancien Regime 1500–1750*, London 1999, and Jeroen Duindam, *Vienna and Versailles. The Courts of Europe's Dynastic Rivals 1550–1780*, Cambridge 2003. For a discussion of these works and the recent 'new court studies' trend, see Hannah Smith, *Court Studies and the Courts of Early Modern Europe*, in: *The Historical Journal* 49/4 (2006), 1229–1238.

for popular political communication.⁹ Most recently, Elisabeth Narkin has considered the influential dynamic between princely courts and their host cities which often presented challenges in terms of sanitation, security, and most of all, space.¹⁰ The physical context of court locations not only determined how courts functioned in terms of access and ceremony but also how courtiers themselves interacted inside and outside the court.¹¹ Urban environments conditioned the lived experiences of European elites and nobles. Yet, despite a growing literature on the sensory elements of early modern cities and rural areas, we lack a consideration for how these sensory-environmental influences affected court elites in their everyday actions.¹² The purpose of this article is to examine the role of sensory experiences in the various Neapolitan residences of Maria Carolina in defining her own spatial system of preferences. In turn, it should become clear that she developed a distinct sensory imprint for each space which affected her conduct as a royal consort.

In three locales where Maria Carolina resided most of the year, she defined her own spatial hierarchy based upon her personal sensory imprints such as the pleasantness of the location and the physical characteristics of the environment. Maria Carolina's own writings reveal clear distinctions based upon sensory experiences. Deconstructing Maria Carolina's spatial hierarchies and the sensory attributions of these familiar spaces allows for an exploration of elite tastes through the nexus of sense and space. Rather than emphasize the novel sensory experience produced by extensive travel, such as Maria Carolina's sojourns to the Holy Roman Empire or her exiles to Sicily, this article deliberately concentrates on the more localized region around Naples as it constitutes a space that she routinely traversed and more concretely ascribed a sensorial memory. This is not to disparage the role of long-distance travel played within sensory experience; quite the contrary since extended international mobility in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was a series of

9 Irmgard Pangerl/Martin Scheutz/Thomas Winkelbauer (eds.), *Der Wiener Hof im Spiegel der Zeremonialprotokolle (1652–1800)*, Innsbruck et al. 2007; Ronald G. Asch, *The Princely Court and Political Space in Early Modern Europe*, in: Beat Kümin/James C. Scott (eds.), *Political Space in Pre-Industrial Europe*, London 2009, 43–60.

10 Elisabeth Narkin, *Princely Residences*, in: Erin Griffey (ed.), *Early Modern Court Culture*, London/New York 2022, 139–155.

11 Stefan Schweizer, *Zwischen Repräsentation und Funktion. Die Stadttore der Renaissance in Italien*, Göttingen 2002, 10f.; Ulrich Schütte, *Die Räume und das Zeremoniell, die Pracht und die Mode. Zur Zeichenhaftigkeit höfischer Innenräume*, in: Peter-Michael Hahn/Ulrich Schütte (eds.), *Zeichen und Raum. Ausstattung und höfisches Zeremoniell in den deutschen Schlössern der Frühen Neuzeit*, München 2006, 167–204.

12 Alexander Cowan/Jill Steward (eds.), *The City and the Senses. Urban Culture since 1500*, London 2007; David Karmon/Christy Anderson, *Early Modern Spaces and Olfactory Traces*, in: Catherine Richardson/Tara Hamling/David Gaimster (eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Material Culture in Early Modern Europe*, London 2021, 354–370.

intense sensory encounters for travellers.¹³ The standard semi-aristocratic practice of extended journeying through the Italian peninsula known as the Grand Tour, for instance, often purposefully involved new sensations through sights, sounds, and tastes.¹⁴ Yet such experiences were fleeting. Relocation is slow to erode the sensory memory of a place routinely inhabited. At the same time, however, the wider spatial dimensions of Maria Carolina's life cannot be totally ignored. This article, therefore, also employs a broader transnational framework by going beyond the physical modality of movement. Imagined journeys allowed elites to conjure up feelings and expectations of travel without actually transposing themselves. Movement does not entirely lie within the physical realm, but rather can occur metaphysically and figuratively. In Maria Carolina's case, imagined movement and subsequent sensation was a frequent mental act performed and recorded by her in her letters. So often, she imagined the sensations stimulated through travel to loved ones. In one clear-cut example, the stimulation produced by the gift of several wax busts by her daughter induced her to overcome physical distances by the sensation of imagined proximity. Though mostly confined within the localized space around Naples, Maria Carolina's imagined sensory experience also allowed her to envisage movement and sensation beyond the physical limits of her existence in Naples-Sicily. In thinking through the spatial preferences of elites, imagined spaces must also be taken into account. In three parts, this essay considers Maria Carolina's movement between different locales within the Neapolitan region, which offers insights into the creation of sensory imprints and the personal development of spatial hierarchies. It first proceeds from a discussion of the methodological apparatus of spatial studies and sensory history to an evaluation of the three major sites of sensorial ascription in and around Naples by Maria Carolina before considering envisioned proximities brought about by imagined sensation.

1. Sense and space

Fundamental to the construction of historical space are three factors: place, the immediate physical locale where one defines surroundings by pattern and behaviour; scale, where space is defined through zoomable units from individuals to rooms

13 On a protracted global scale, see Andrew J. Rotter, *Empires of the Senses. Bodily Encounters in Imperial India and the Philippines*, Oxford 2019, 131–263.

14 Richard Wrigley, *Making Sense of Rome*, in: *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 35/4 (2012), 551–564; Shannon Russel, *Consuming Italy. From Goethe's Italian Journey to Gilbert's Eat, Pray, Love*, in: Lisa Colletta (ed.), *The Legacy of the Grand Tour. New Essays on Travel, Literature, and Culture*, Vancouver 2015, 133–154.

to landscapes and beyond; and time, representing the inherent conditions within a particular moment of existence. Sociologist Henri Lefebvre differentiated the scale of space from abstract natural space (absolute space) to the complex urbanities constructed by society (social space) wherein a person's perception contorts three delineations of space: the perceived (material), conceived (imagined), and lived (embodied) space.¹⁵ The Lefebvrian lens analyses space as a construct of societal interaction between these delineations, or, as he put it, the notion that "society secretes that society's space" which he termed "spatial practice".¹⁶ This spatial practice imparts a temporal and physical structure to everyday activities within the socio-economic context of one's peers. Maria Carolina's spatial practice rooted itself in the strict socio-cultural world of the eighteenth century when boundaries existed between social classes within Neapolitan society – even though her husband, famed as a 'pauper prince' or *il re lazzarone*, blurred the social distinctions between royal and ruled.¹⁷ As part of this spatial practice, she conformed to new realities of queenship which differed starkly from her upbringing in Vienna.¹⁸ Her status as a foreign-born consort imparted a certain level of estrangement between her and her Neapolitan environment. As a newcomer, she often found Neapolitan ministers and habits to be cruder and less refined but more ostentatious than the pious baroque splendour of her Viennese youth.¹⁹ Attendance at court was to be expected by onlookers but the social performance of presiding over popular ceremonies (as discussed below) as well as habitation in the national capital proved difficult challenges on account of the sensory imprints encountered in those spaces.

Sensory history has been instrumental in dismantling the folly of strict periodization. The study of sensory regimes over large timescales obscures the more multivariate nature of sensory experience. Temporal registers operate on a linear scale,

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- 15 For this and Lefebvre's spatial triad, see Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Oxford 1991, 38f.
- 16 *Ibid.*, 38; Henri Lefebvre, *Space. Social Product and Use Value*, in: Neil Brenner/Stuart Elden (eds.), *State, Space, World. Selected Essays by Henri Lefebvre*, Minneapolis/London 2009, 185–195.
- 17 The phrase "Il re lazzarone" referred to Ferdinand's popularity and hospitality of the lazzaroni populace in Naples who were noted vagabonds and street-dwellers. For his contrasting style of rulership, see Adam Wandruszka, 'Il "principe filosofo" e il "re lazzarone". Lettere del granduca Pietro Leopoldo sul suo soggiorno a Napoli nel 1768', in: *Rivista storica Italiana* 72 (1960), 501–510.
- 18 On Maria Carolina's upbringing, see Maria Theresia to Maria Carolina, 19th August 1767, Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (HHStA), Hausarchiv (HA), Familienakten (FA), K. 55, *Erziehung 1748–1794*, Nr. 4: Abschriften Maria Theresia an Erzherzogin Charlotte. For her adjustments, see Cinzia Recca, *Complex Interdependence Between Public and Private Moments. Queenly Audiences, Meetings and Precouncil*, in: *idem*, *Diary*, 2017, 43–62; Giuseppe Cirillo, *I nuovi assetti istituzionali del Regno di Napoli nel periodo di Maria Carolina e di Ferdinando IV*, in: Giulio Sodano/Giulio Brevetti (eds.), *Io, la regina. Maria Carolina d'Asburgo-Lorena tra politica, fede, arte e cultura*, Palermo 2016, 97–143; for a generalized context on the differences, see Giulio Sodano, *Napoli e Vienna nel XVIII secolo tra viceré e una regina*, in: Giulio Sodano/Giulio Brevetti (eds.), *Io, la regina. Maria Carolina d'Asburgo-Lorena e suo tempo*, Palermo 2020, 3–24.
- 19 Amalia Bordiga Amadei, *Maria Carolina d'Austria e il regno delle Due Sicilie*, Napoli 1934, 34–42.

advancing the change over time dynamic within sensory history. Yet contracting the temporal register opens up a more vertical angle on the overlapping sensory experiences of individuals. In Maria Carolina's case, several planes of sensory regimes overlapped during her everyday life. Translocation from one space to another triggered associated and ascribed sensory imprints while the lingering effects of another continued. In this way, sensation bears a remarkable parallel to Lefebvre's "indefinite multitude of space" where each layer of space is "piled upon, or perhaps contained within the next".²⁰ By unpicking the threads of such layering, the synchronousness of sensory regimes becomes more apparent. In essence, it allows us to peel back how spatial practices could construct multiple sensory regimes as the embodied individual moved through the plane of existence from one perceived dimension to another.

Finally, there also exists an 'invisible scale' within the spatial practice and physical dimensionality of an individual's life. The 'invisible scale' cannot be measured accurately as it 'exists' only as a cognitional process in the perceiver. With this, I refer to the imagined journeys and sensations of an individual and the scale upon which these imagined actions occur. It is perhaps a cognate to Lefebvre's idea of conceived space. Helpfully, scholars within the social sciences and from a critical urban theory perspective have developed the concept of *Thirdspace*, that is the "geographical imaginaries" of space that are both real and imagined.²¹ Pioneered by the post-modern geographer Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace* offers a useful foil here to encapsulate the imagined sensations and journeys provoked by the physical and material space.²² Senses played little role in the original proposition of *Thirdspace* theory but perceived or imagined sensation forms the creation of alternative spaces between the real and non-real. It works towards answering the call for a "reconceptualization of categories referring to the spatial component of social life".²³ At the same time, it permits a greater focus on how spatial meaning is derived and inferred from imagined locales within the mental space of an individual. Maria Carolina's sensory system not only provoked spatial constructs within the localized confines around Naples but also allowed her to travel within the spatial imagination of her mind. In doing so, the senses affected and influenced her perception of imagined movement through material objects.

20 Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 1991, 8.

21 Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace. Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Cambridge, MA 1996, 56f.

22 On the pros and cons of Soja's theory, see Deborah Dixon, *Between Difference and Alterity. Engagements with Edward Soja's Thirdspace*, in: *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 89/2 (1999), 338f.

23 Martina Löw, *O Spatial Turn. Para Uma Sociologia do espaço*, in: *Tempo Social. Revista de sociologia da USP* 25/2 (2013), 17–34, 17.

2. Sensory imprints in and around Naples

Maria Carolina's localized space revolved around the city of Naples and nearby palaces. The Neapolitan royals owned several properties in and around the city. Three palaces formed the major crux of Maria Carolina's life: the central Royal Palace of Naples (Palazzo Reale di Napoli); the coastal palace at Portici; and the grand palace of Caserta (Reggia di Caserta). The space between these three palaces encompassed a medium circumference of around twenty-five miles. There were further spots around Naples with a royal connection. At the edge of the city was the Royal Palace of Capodimonte. Built to showcase the art collections of the Bourbons, Maria Carolina's husband King Ferdinand IV used Capodimonte primarily as a hunting lodge.²⁴ As such Maria Carolina rarely travelled there and so it does not form part of the discussion here. Similarly, on the coastline around Posillipo, Ferdinand often went fishing but again without his consort.²⁵ At Castellammare di Stabia, sixteen miles away from the capital, the royal family also owned a villa known as the Quisiana Palace. It was another of Ferdinand's haunts used for extravagant soirees from time to time.²⁶ Although set upon a hill among lush forest, the palace was unappealing to Maria Carolina who visited only sparingly after Ferdinand invested significant sums into its redevelopment up to 1790.²⁷ The renovated fountains and parkland pleased her to a greater degree, but she still stayed away from Ferdinand's woodland retreat.²⁸ It is sensible, therefore, to focus solely on the three palaces of Naples, Portici, and Caserta that constituted her main habitual spaces.

Maria Carolina's life was less regimented than other courts where royal itineraries followed minute protocols.²⁹ In an edition of the extant volumes of the queen's diaries, historian Cinzia Recca has provided an overview of Maria Carolina's daily routine as an insightful window into the somewhat chaotic schedule defined by speculative visits by her husband, demands of state, and the burden of childrearing.³⁰ Recca helpfully drew attention to the 'structural physiognomy' of the queen's

24 Nina Spinosa (ed.), Museo Nazionale di Capodimonte, Napoli 1994, 9.

25 Recca, *Diary*, 2017, 206f., 212f., 216f.

26 The National Archives at Kew, State Papers, Naples, SP93–31, fol. 116, Hamilton Despatch No. 19, 23 June 1778.

27 Giuseppe D'Angelo, *La Castellammare Borbonica, 1734–1860. Cultura, turismo et industria nella città – secoli XVIII–XIX*, Napoli 2014, 24–28.

28 Giuseppe Campolieti, *Il re Lazzarone. Ferdinando IV di Borbone, amato dal popolo e condannato dalla storia*, Milano 2000, 215.

29 Conte Corti, *Ich, eine Tochter*, 1950, 96f., 107f.; Mirella Vera Mafri, *Maria Carolina d'Asburgo-Lorena e la politica internazionale napoletana (1770–1799)*, in: Sodano/Brevetti (eds.), *Io, la regina*, 2020, 25–37.

30 Recca, *Diary*, 2017, 1–18, 19–42; other editions include: Mélanie Traversier (ed.), *Le Journal d'une Reine. Marie-Caroline de Naples dans L'Italie des Lumières*, Ceyzérieu 2017; idem, *Le Journal*

daily regimes refracted through her diary entries, though a particular focus on the senses serves to underscore the routine periods of interruption and reprieve which the queen encountered. Over the course of her lifetime, for example, she endured at least eighteen pregnancies and helped raise seven surviving children. Her diary records the frequent punctuations by a child's sudden illness or the tempestuous tantrums that required a mother's soothing rather than a nanny's scolding. Such daily entries also make clear and underline the role of the senses in determining an ad hoc routine of a queen. Conversely, the senses also provided structure; hearing Catholic mass began most of her days as theatrical productions of the latest operas provided an aural bookend to her waking hours.³¹ Yet, at the same time, her diaries highlight frequent relocation, which broadly conformed to seasonal rhythms but also followed the queen's own whims. Finally, Maria Carolina's personal correspondences also make clear her own pronounced judgements on inhabited spaces. In communications with her family members, she often remarked on her spatial preferences.

In terms of a record of her sensory experiences, both her diaries and personal correspondence reveal an equal level of insight into the queen's own spatial tastes around Naples. From this corpus, we can reconstruct her spatial hierarchy as defined by sensory experiences from three regularly visited places via extrapolating specific mentions (implicit and explicit) of senses in relation to her location. Maria Carolina certainly ascribed similar sensory attributes and contrasted her lived existence in Naples with places she had visited elsewhere. It is for this reason that her imagined spatial connections through the senses follows on from a thematic outline of each location and the corresponding sensorial attribution.

2.1 Sensory habituation in Naples

The Royal Palace stands among the famous bustling streets in the centre of Naples. The main façade nowadays overlooks the expansive Piazza del Plebiscito, which gradually emerged from a central market square in the eighteenth century to become the major fulcrum of the city's open space. Yet the space between the former convent of San Francesco da Paola and the Royal Palace was much more hemmed in during

de Marie-Caroline de Naples. *Chronique d'un Royal Ennui*, in: Michel Cassan (ed.), *Écritures de familles, écritures de soi (France-Italie XVIe-XIXe siècles)*, Limoges 2011, 127–153.

31 Recca, *Diary*, 2017, 262–263, 340; for her religious devotion, see Elisa Novi Chavarria, *Il confessore della regina*, in: Sodano/Brevetti (eds.), *Io, la regina*, 2016, 75–96.

Maria Carolina's time.³² The square at that time was an economic centre of Naples where courtiers gathered, and market traders bartered. It was a political centre too. The Palazzo Reale served as the central hub for the Neapolitan-Sicilian court with audience chambers dispersed among the private apartments for the royal family. Originally planned in the seventeenth century as a residence for the Spanish viceroy at a time when Naples-Sicily belonged to the Spanish crown, the palace became the official residence of the Neapolitan royals after the ascension of Charles III in 1734. Its completion coincided with the arrival of Maria Carolina in 1768 and marked the place for official audiences of the monarchs and the reception of foreign dignitaries.³³ The splendid Teatro di San Carlo adjoins the complex directly and entertained the Neapolitan elites with the latest operatic recitals. Maria Carolina was an avid listener, often singing the catchiest airs to herself in her rooms for days afterwards.³⁴ Her own personal quarters consisted of a wing of the palace facing away from the busy square and overlooking the gardens to the south, but still the hustle and bustle of the city was audible wherever one was within the city.

Maria Carolina associated Naples with tumult and noise, reinforcing the negative proximity of the palace within the city centre. She regarded the din of the city as something detrimental to her health and work ethic. Hearing the bustling streets, the jeering marketeers, or the ecstatic crowds troubled her greatly on occasion. The queen lamented her return to Naples after visits to the countryside when relocation from quietude to cacophony heightened the painful transition between the two spaces. "We are staying there [Naples] again this month", she bemoaned to her brother, "I will abandon the peaceful stay [here in Caserta] with difficulty". In this case it was the "noise of the city" which she explicitly marked as something "overly odious" to her senses.³⁵ Movement between locales not only increased her sensitivity to the noise of the city in Naples but contrasted the calm she had enjoyed in Caserta.

Maria Carolina periodically endured even greater exposure to the noise of the city. Naples had been a venue of ostentatious festival and religious extremity for centuries. In the eighteenth century, the curation of public festivals became a powerful tool for Bourbon rulers to shape their popular image and to create a greater sense of connection between them and their subjects. The nascent Bourbon regime

32 Gaetana Cantone, *Nella Napoli del Seicento: dal 'largo' alla piazza*, in: Marino Angela (ed.), *Le piazze. Lo spazio pubblico dal medioevo all'età contemporanea*, Milano 1993, 115–130; John A. Davis, *Naples and Napoleon. Southern Italy and the European Revolutions 1780–1860*, Oxford 2006, 206.

33 Paolo Giordano, *Ferdinando Fuga a Napoli*, Napoli 1997, 30f.

34 Francesco Cotticelli, *Notizie teatrali e musicali nelle lettere di Maria Carolina alla figlia Maria Teresa*, in: Sodano/Brevetti (eds.), *Io, la regina*, 2016, 145–166; Recca, *Diary*, 2017, 190f.; see also John A. Rice, *Empress Marie Therese and Music at the Viennese Court 1792–1807*, Cambridge 2003, 77–80.

35 Archivio di Stato di Napoli (ASNA), Archivio Borbone (AB), Busta 77, fols. 136r–137r, Maria Carolina to Leopold, 23 September 1783.

relied heavily on the participation and sponsorship of such festivals in their efforts to ingratiate the new dynasty among the local populace. *Feste – Farina – Forca* (Festivals – Flour – Gallows) ran the common refrain describing the three underpinnings of Bourbon support from their Neapolitan subjects.³⁶ As the queen consort to the second Bourbon king in Naples-Sicily, Maria Carolina performed a key function by her attendance at such public events. These events, however, were chaotic to the extreme and often lapsed into horrific public blood fests even by contemporary standards.

The most notorious of all popular festivals was the Cockaigne (*Cuccagna*) or carnival celebrations. Hordes of ravenous peasants and city-dwellers descended onto bountiful Cockaigne floats (*Carri-cuccagna*) that could be freely consumed at the cost of the monarchy. Competition for the sustenance on offer, however, incensed the hungry masses who descended on the charitable displays with uninhibited gusto. If not crushed in the initial stampede, participants battered one another to collect as much food as possible before gorging on their spoils and physically defending it against further onslaught. The spectacle had grown in popularity and sophistication throughout the eighteenth century. By Maria Carolina's time, ornate stages resembling temples of generosity presented difficult obstacle courses for the commoners. Cockaigne polls dangled appetising offerings of cooked meat and fresh produce for willing climbers. Makeshift hunts of enclosed animals invited the hungry to club their prey to death and cart it off. Such sights turned even the experienced stomach of Donatien Alphonse Francois, Marquis de Sade who thought the Neapolitan Cockaigne of 1776 to be "the most barbarous spectacle that one could imagine the world" and the "most horrible lesson of disorder."³⁷ A brutal Cockaigne marked the arrival of Maria Carolina as the new royal consort in 1768, when swarms of peasants pillaged offerings in front of the royal palace as elites watched from their balconies. Seeing live animals ripped limb from limb so disturbed Maria Carolina that she wished to return home immediately.³⁸

Cockaignes formed a core component of the Neapolitan carnival season which usually featured several culinary orgies begun with the downward hand of the king himself. It was a highpoint of royal representation within the social calendar. As the sovereign consort, Maria Carolina's role to attend and observe such scenes from the

36 It was a variation of Rome's 'bread and circuses', see Vittorio Gleijeses, *Feste, farina, e forca*, Napoli 1972, 7.

37 Nelson Moe, *The View from Vesuvius. Italian Culture and the Southern Question*, Berkeley, CA 2002, 63; James A. Steintrager (ed.), *Marquis de Sade. Journey to Italy*, Toronto 2020, 190–192.

38 *Relazione del pubblico solenne ingresso fatto nella città di Napoli dalle loro maestà il re, e regina delle due Sicilie*, Roma 1768, 1–4; Conte Corti, *Ich, eine Tochter*, 1950, 58–61.

royal pavilion was necessary.³⁹ Yet the profusion of aromas, the cacophony of sound, and the throngs of crowds created a maddeningly vibrant atmosphere.⁴⁰ Maria Carolina abhorred the season entirely. For her, it represented a clear-cut sensory overload. “We are in town to support the carnival”, she lamented to her brother, “to me it all feels so messy”.⁴¹ ‘Messy’ in this sense reflected the dizzying sonority and brutal visual nature of the event. What joy Maria Carolina could find in the Neapolitan carnival season came from occupying the same space as foreign dignitaries whom she preferred to converse with rather than witnessing the chaos unfolding among commoners. Yet when the Austro-Turkish war in 1788 prevented many foreign guests from attending, she complained bitterly of participating without distraction.⁴² At other times, she simply spoke of her “eagerness” for the carnival to end.⁴³ The sensory harshness of the sights and sounds of mobs spoiling over gifted food provoked a longing within Maria Carolina to retreat to a space devoid of loud barbarity. “These are the times I hate”, she confessed, “because I do not like chaos, and I cannot wait for the moment to find myself peacefully in Caserta where I may be warmly and comfortably housed and where I have less tortuous noise”.⁴⁴ Maria Carolina’s suggestion of contrast between Naples and Caserta reveals her spatial disposition as well as her sensorial preference for a place imprinted in her mind as quieter and calmer. For Maria Carolina the extreme sensory experiences – in this case, the sights and sounds of a vicious ritual – and spatial confines of Naples were deeply intertwined. The queen received little reprieve, however. Combined with the continual cacophonous backdrop of the Neapolitan space, the Cockaigne served as a breaking point for her senses following the attrition of daily chaos.

Maria Carolina preferred to escape Naples even when Carnival season had passed. Urban avoidance remained a constant logic in her regional mobility.⁴⁵ A popular destination in the eighteenth century was a natural mole in the Bay of Naples known as the Molo, which lay between Naples and Pozzuoli. By all accounts, the breeze was particularly soothing at this spot. It became a site of recreation and relaxation for all Neapolitans. Nobles refrained from pedestrianizing along the Molo, however, and instead travelled in open-top carriages for fresh air to rush over their exposed faces but whilst maintaining a degree of separation from the plebian wanderers or the idling *lazzaroni* (street dwellers). During his stay in Naples in 1770, the adolescent

39 Alessandro Coletti, *La regina di Napoli*, Napoli 1986, 26f.

40 Gabriel Guarino, *Public Rituals and Festivals in Naples, 1503–1799*, in: Tommaso Astarita (ed.), *A Companion to Early Modern Naples*, Leiden/Boston, MA 2013, 272–274.

41 ASNA, AB, Busta 77, fols. 100v–101r, Maria Carolina to Leopold, 11 February 1781.

42 HHStA, HA, *Sammelbände* (SB), K. 11–1, fols. 21r–v, Maria Carolina to Leopold, 29 January 1788.

43 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 11–1, fol. 61, Maria Carolina to Leopold, 27 February 1787.

44 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 11–2, fol. 23r, Maria Carolina to Leopold, 3 March 1788.

45 Recca, *Diary*, 2017, 182, 259.

composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart noticed the frequent rides of Maria Carolina either as she took carriage rides along the mole for pleasure.⁴⁶ Here the pleasant sensory experience of a fresh breeze came with a defined social order and a well-maintained distance between her own space and the people around her. It was an ordered and carefully choreographed space which reflected the elitist civilities around social interaction and separation between certain classes of the population. Even in a closed urban environment, movement permitted different sensational outcomes.

2.2 Sensory travel in Portici

The Palace of Portici, on the coast among the slopes of Mount Vesuvius, could not accommodate the whole court during the summer months, so it had a quieter, more private atmosphere limited to the core royal household. It was an intimate space for Maria Carolina closely connected to raising her children and ensuring they received an adequate exposure to fresh air and good exercise.⁴⁷ Yet Maria Carolina also received guests at Portici such as her brother, Emperor Joseph II, in 1769.⁴⁸ For her, it was a place of revitalisation and respite from court; a space where quiet could give way to pleasure. Portici was where she sought refuge from the intensity of the urban environment. She still discharged many of her duties at Portici, meeting ministers and caring for her children, but the overall arrangements allowed the queen to recuperate at peace in contrast to the noisy hubbub of the metropolis. Proximity to the coast defined Maria Carolina's sensory relation to the space around Portici. Just as on the mole in the Bay of Naples, a strong sea breeze crested along the shoreline. In 1773, King Ferdinand ordered a new mole to be built along the coast at Portici so the sea could be admired during leisurely strolls.⁴⁹ The reconfiguration of the space around Portici revolved around the immediacy of the waters and the coolness of the air blowing ashore. The freshness of the air was a notable feature. Maria Carolina's brother remarked during his visit how the palace was his favourite among the Neapolitan abodes for this reason. "The air is excellent as long as Vesuvius is not too impolite", Joseph jocularly recalled.⁵⁰ Indeed, the menacing volcano instilled some sense of continual fear among the local inhabitants but its added benefit of providing

46 Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to Nannerl Mozart, 5 June 1770, in: Lady Grace Wallace (ed.), *The Letters of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1769–1791)*, vol. 1, New York 1866, 23.

47 Recca, *Diary*, 2017, 190f.

48 *Ibid.*, 186f.

49 Nicola Nocerino, *La real villa di Portici, Napoli 1787*, 133f.

50 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 20, fols. 363r–363v, Joseph II to Maria Carolina, 26 October 1789.

heat to thermal pools outweighed the unpredictable risk to life.⁵¹ In an age when springs, spas, and natural geotherms denoted wellness and health, the region around Portici became synonymous with the general improvement to lifestyle.

It is little wonder, then, that Maria Carolina also defined her relocations to Portici in terms of health and convalescence. “I have been obliged”, she wrote, “for the sake of my health to repair to Portici.”⁵² Better air quality around Portici supported her view that the new environ would help her recovery from the stress and overstimulation in the capital. In the eighteenth century, the countryside environment generally held a medicinal value for people when miasmas supposedly caused the onset of disease in a time before airborne illnesses had been scientifically identified. “The air renews me”, Maria Carolina once wrote about Portici, indicating again the positive change in sensation brought about from her travel to the coastline.⁵³ She espoused the same belief in the regenerative quality of the airs around Portici for her young children, whom she behoved to enjoy the outdoors. On several occasions, she informed her family members how she had taken her children to Portici specifically for them to breathe good air.⁵⁴ Maria Carolina’s sensory regime in Portici was overall more positive than in Naples. At the Royal Palace of Portici, at least she could isolate herself from the disruption of courtly life and the tumult of popular festivals in Naples.

2.3 Sensory accommodation in Caserta

The Royal Palace at Caserta became one of the nerve centres of the court. Officials and dignitaries inhabited the same space as the royal family in a palace designed to rival the palatial marvel at Versailles. Designed by Luigi Vanvitelli (1700–1773), work began in 1754 and lasted for the next twenty-two years until 1776. Upon completion, the *Reggia di Caserta* became the largest royal residence in the world. Caserta, therefore, offered Maria Carolina the most in terms of luxury and space. The spacious surroundings gave her both greater comfort and sanctuary away from the intensely populated city or the comparatively cramped conditions in Portici. Her apartment occupied a wing of the palace near to her children’s quarters. The interior was a lavish and richly decorated space consisting of the latest architecture making use of mirrors for maximisation of light. Inside, she occupied herself for most of the

51 Roberto Pane, *Ville vesuviane del Settecento*, Napoli 1959, 7; Alfonso Tortora/Sean Cocco, *Baroque Tectonics. Eruptions and Disruptions in the Vesuvian City*, in: *Open Arts Journal* 6 (2017/18), 86–97.

52 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 32–1, fols. 162r–163v, Maria Carolina to Francis, 5 October 1793.

53 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 32–1, fol. 163v, Maria Carolina to Francis, 5 October 1793.

54 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 32–1, fols. 3r–5v, Maria Carolina to Leopold, 5 January 1786.

day, quietly toiling away on her letters.⁵⁵ The queen preferred writing and reading seemingly above all.⁵⁶ Outside, the extensive English gardens and esplanade offered a large tranquil setting. Caserta was a liberating experience for Maria Carolina.

Although Caserta provided Maria Carolina with a modicum of insulation against the hustle and bustle of the streets of Naples, her children frequently occupied her apartments. Maria Carolina did not always seem to mind the company of her children playing whilst she worked. Though on occasion she noted how such circumstances were often punctuated by a “lot of noise”.⁵⁷ Close family provided overstimulation but also comfort. Holding her children, cradling them to sleep, and playing with them were all intensely stimulating acts and fulfilled her sensory regime as a mother. Similarly, she enjoyed the presence of her husband at Caserta, with whom she often ventured outdoors. She found their family walks “especially brilliant” during his stays.⁵⁸

Caserta, then, carried an appealing sensory order for Maria Carolina that was elevated by the emotional comfort of her family.⁵⁹ “It is the place that I prefer”, she remarked of her time in Caserta, “being well lodged in the beautiful countryside where it is quieter: the children walk a lot there, which does them a great amount of good”.⁶⁰ She constantly remarked of stillness and beauty in the countryside. For Maria Carolina, Caserta was her “tranquil” place.⁶¹ “I am so pleased to be at rest in Caserta”, she wrote to one of her brothers.⁶²

It is particularly noteworthy that Maria Carolina’s three-chambered library was at Caserta, a space where she could pen her letters or read the latest in French fiction or histories, which she read throughout her lifetime.⁶³ By contrast, a bookwheel at the Royal Palace in Naples reflects the more confined and purpose-orientated nature of her working space in the city whereas in Caserta, the three blue rooms of the Palatine Library (as it has become known) is exalted by the richly ornate decoration resembling more dedicated space for learning and meditation.⁶⁴ Neatly arranged

55 Paola Zito, *Maria Carolina e la sua Blauwe Bibliothek*, in: Sodano/Brevetti (eds.), *Io, la regina*, 2016, 167–196.

56 Benedetto Croce, *La biblioteca tedesca di Maria Carolina d’Austria, regina di Napoli*, in: *La Critica. Rivista di Letteratura, Storia e Filosofia* 34 (1934), no. 1, 71–77, no. 3, 233–240, no. 4, 310–317; Zito, *Maria Carolina*, 2016, 167–196.

57 Recca, *Diary*, 2017, 235.

58 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 20, fols. 157r–157v, *Maria Carolina to Leopold*, 18 October 1791.

59 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 10.7, fol. 23, *Maria Carolina to Leopold*, [s.d., January 1786].

60 ASNA, AB, Busta 77, fol. 139r, *Maria Carolina to Leopold*, 30 September 1783.

61 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 11–1, fol. 61v, *Maria Carolina to Leopold*, 27 February 1787.

62 ASNA, AB, Busta 77, fols. 57r–57v, *Maria Carolina to Leopold*, 14 January 1783.

63 Traversier, *Journal d’une Reine*, 2017, 252.

64 Giovanni De Nitto, *La Biblioteca Palatina della Reggia di Caserta: la collezione bodoniana*, in: *Rara volumina* 2 (1996), 75–84; Annalisa Porzio, *Gli affreschi di Füger nella Biblioteca Reale di Caserta*, in: Pierluigi Leone de Castris (ed.), *Scritti di storia dell’arte in onore di Raffaello Causa*, Napoli 1988,

books encased within rich oak-lined cabinets reflect the order of things in the universalist knowledge space of Maria Carolina's three rooms. In one of two cornice pieces in the library's central room, a portrait of Maria Carolina surrounded by four muses represents the genius of the queen.⁶⁵ An allegory of the sciences makes for a pointed counterpart opposite. Both iconographic representations served to underscore the dedication to peaceful and secluded learning by Maria Carolina in Caserta.

Aside from the function of a familial and intellectual space, the fortifying effects of the scenic environment complemented Maria Carolina's quiet existence at Caserta. Much like the fresh maritime breeze at Portici, the lush forestation and curated gardens provided a necessary contrast to the city of Naples. Maria Carolina was always glad to escape the heat of the metropolis in the summer months for the coolness of Caserta.⁶⁶ When ill, she wished to stay in one place, invariably Caserta.⁶⁷ As in Portici, she could recuperate at Caserta without the interference of busy streets and enjoyed instead the palatial scenes surrounding her quarters, especially when she was pregnant. The "country air" restored her strength during her pregnancies.⁶⁸ In times of political pressure, such as when criticism appeared in print of their rule or when poor harvests predicted unrest in the city or when an earthquake panicked the local population in Naples, Maria Carolina thought of Caserta as more of a safe haven. "Thank God for Caserta", she wrote, "it is away from the city and from the world".⁶⁹ As a refuge from noise, heat, and overexertion, Caserta offered Maria Carolina a much-needed change from the burdensome extremes of the city.

3. Imagined senses and imagined proximities

Maria Carolina's spatial constructions through the senses also existed within imagined spaces. Visual and haptic stimuli provided the queen with a surrogate spatial experience. The touch of a letter penned by a loved one can connect one person to another, for example, without proximity. Imagined journeys, inspired by the senses, enabled the queen to envisage her relocation to other locales without the need for physical travel. In this section, a broader conceptualization of movement as a cog-

343–349. The bookwheel was designed by Giovanni Uldrich and similar to monastical devices, see John Considine, *The Ramellian Bookwheel*, in: *Erudition and the Republic of Letters* 1/4 (2016), 381–411.

65 *The Genio della pittura ritrae Maria Carolina* is believed to be done by the artist De Angelis Desiderio sometime after 1800 but during the occupancy of Maria Carolina and before the Murat regime.

66 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 10–7, fols. 31r–31v, Maria Carolina to Leopold, 9 April 1786.

67 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 10–7, fol. 33r, Maria Carolina to Leopold, 20 April 1786.

68 ASNA, AB, Busta 77, fols. 139r–140v, Maria Carolina to Leopold, 30 September 1783.

69 ASNA, AB, Busta 77, fol. 141v, Maria Carolina to Leopold, 7 October 1783.

nitive function allows for further examination into Maria Carolina's construction of space through touch and sight.

Maria Carolina's imagined journeys arose out feelings of estrangement within Naples-Sicily. As a foreign-born consort, she drew a certain degree of ire by her Neapolitan contemporaries. The leading minister under King Ferdinand, Bernardo Tanucci, viewed the young queen most of all as a meddling influence, sent by Maria Theresa to exploit the perceived inabilities of the king and to gain a political foothold in the southern Italian kingdom.⁷⁰ Distaste for the queen persisted throughout her early years in Naples and became an even greater, more public hostility directed towards her following the revolutionary upheavals of the 1790s.⁷¹ Neapolitan malice compounded her separation from her original family. Maria Carolina was after all an archduchess forced to relocate away from her family at the age of sixteen who no doubt suffered from the feeling of isolation and disconnectedness with her siblings. In later years, she yearned to be close to her family members as well as her own grown-up children who wedded abroad. She shared a close bond with her brother Pietro Leopoldo, Grand Duke of Tuscany and later Holy Roman Emperor. It was a particular sadness for her when they could not find time to meet despite their initial proximity on the Italian peninsula.⁷²

In her letters to Pietro Leopoldo, Maria Carolina pined for the sensation of touch. She missed most of all the ability to throw her arms around him and to embrace his children at the same time. She extolled the closeness between them which the physical distance denied.⁷³ Absence of touch can be one of the most difficult senses of withdrawal, and it certainly was for Maria Carolina when away from her family.⁷⁴ In finding solutions, Maria Carolina and her contemporaries turned to material objects for succour. Trinkets and gifts animated physically distant relationships and signified respect, especially among the Habsburg dynasty.⁷⁵ Objects have obvious connections to imagined places. The depictions of foreign lands or alien designs and patterns provoke the imagination of the viewer such as on Chinese ceramics. As art historian John R. Haddad argued, "idealized Chinese scenes" on homeware allowed

70 Rosa Mincuzzi, Bernardo Tanucci. *Ministro di Ferdinando di Borbone*, Bari 1967, 94f.; idem (ed.), *Lettere di Bernardo Tanucci a Carlo III di Borbone 1759–1776*, Roma 1969, 180.

71 Cinzia Recca, Maria Carolina and Marie Antoinette. Sisters and Queens in the Mirror of Jacobin Public Opinion, in: *Royal Studies Journal* 1/1 (2014), 17–36.

72 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 10–5–1, fols. 41r–42, Maria Carolina to Leopold, 1 September 1778; fols. 49r–51r, Maria Carolina to Leopold, 26 November 1778.

73 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 10–5–1, fols. 25r–27r, Leopold to Maria Carolina, 13 July 1778; fols. 37r–39r, Leopold to Maria Carolina, 22 August 1778; fols. 41r–42v, Maria Carolina to Leopold, 1 September 1778.

74 Karin Harrasser, *Einleitung*, in: idem (ed.), *Auf Tuchfühlung. Eine Wissensgeschichte des Tastsinns*, Frankfurt am Main/New York 2017, 8.

75 Kerstin Merkel, 'Der guten Mutter ... dem besten Vater'. Eigene Zeichnungen als Geschenke in der Familie der Habsburger, in: *Wiener Jahrbuch für Kunstgeschichte* 59 (2010), 153–183.

women to “construct an exotic China, called ‘Cathay’, that they could visit in their imaginations at a time when the real China was cloaked in mystery”.⁷⁶ In the case of Maria Carolina, gifts exchanged between the Viennese and Neapolitan-Sicilian families substituted the physical dividing spacing between Naples and Vienna.

On 4 November 1793, Maria Carolina received a series of wax busts from her family in Vienna for her name day. Four busts depicted her daughter, Empress Marie Therese, her son-in-law Holy Roman Emperor Francis II, and two of her grandchildren. The wax busts arose from the workshop of Count Joseph Deym von Strítez and Leopold Posch, who specialized in the creation of realistic depictions of their clients. Posch, a sculptor who had turned to the medium of wax from marble for health reasons, found that wax gave a more realistic definition to the subject and allowed for a closer analogue to the skin of the individuals. Deym affixed real hair and clothing to the wax figures.⁷⁷ The unusual process resulted in uncanny likenesses sustained in wax. Reflecting on the semiotic ambiguity of wax, art historian Allison Goudie has suggested that “it occupies a curious status in the presumed binary between thing or person represented”.⁷⁸ Whereas paint approximates the human condition, wax allowed the artist a much more exact rendition of human appearance and flesh. Unfortunately, these busts have not survived to give some idea of their composition but existing examples of the Deym-Posch workshop give a sense of the true-to-life characteristics.⁷⁹

Marie Therese sent the ensemble to Naples as a surrogate for her mother. They acted as a physical reminder of their bond as well as a token of esteem from daughter to mother, empress to queen. The quartet of wax busts so pleased Maria Carolina that she had them placed in her personal bedroom at the Royal Palace in Naples. She occasionally had them moved from room to room around the palace because she wished to “always have them near”.⁸⁰ The busts, therefore, accompanied Maria Carolina on her own micro dimensional space throughout the confines of the palace. “I cannot detach myself from these dear figures”, the queen wrote in thanks to her daughter. “I am simply mad about them”, she concluded.⁸¹ The obsession was long lasting. In a later letter, Maria Carolina explained how she would visit the busts

76 John R. Haddad, *Imagined Journeys to Distant Cathay: Constructing China with Ceramics, 1780–1920*, in: *Winterthur Portfolio* 41/1 (2007), 53–80.

77 Rita Steblin, *The Wax Modeler Joseph Deym and the Artistic Link Between Vienna and Naples in the 1790s*, in: Sodano/Brevetti (eds.), *Io, la regina*, 2016, 201–240.

78 Allison Goudie, *The Wax Portrait Bust as a Trompe-l’œil? A Case Study of Queen Maria Carolina of Naples*, in: *Oxford Art Journal* 36/1 (2013), 55–74, 61.

79 In addition to the bust of Maria Carolina mentioned below there is also a bust of Ferdinand IV and Sir William Hamilton, the British ambassador in Naples.

80 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 55, s.n., Giovanni Vivencio to Marie Therese, 5 November 1793.

81 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 55, fols. 224v–225r, Maria Carolina to Marie Therese, 5 November 1793.

and bring her children in order to spend time with her imagined family.⁸² “These figures give me more comfort and happiness than I have had for a long time”, she commented.⁸³ For Maria Carolina, these physical objects bridged the space between her and her family by visually stimulating, and perhaps deceiving her eyes into imagining her family before her. The sensory surrogate of viewing wax busts prompted an imagined journey. Rather than travelling between the normative spaces within Naples, Maria Carolina could transport herself to an imagined reunion with her family in Vienna. “One believes that at any moment they will open their mouths and speak”, she exclaimed to her daughter as an indication of the provocative nature of the objects and their imagined sensory effects.⁸⁴

By commissioning her own wax bust, Maria Carolina sought to gift her daughter a similar sensation of closeness. The bust of Maria Carolina featured a lock of the queen’s own hair and a fragment of her own garment.⁸⁵ By imbuing the material object with intimate aspects of her own person, Maria Carolina sought to heighten the realism of the object. It was the most accurate representation of her likeness but also, through touch and sight, allowed for a more intimate, tangible copy of herself to be transported hundreds of miles to her family.

4. Conclusion

The sensory environment of Naples exerted a considerable effect on the personal spatial preferences of Queen Maria Carolina. Maria Carolina’s repeated transitions between locales in and around Naples gradually created a system of spatial preferences for the queen. At Caserta, she felt more at ease given the space, quietude, and closeness of her family. In Portici, therapeutic qualities of sea air provided her with a restoration of her senses, especially in contrast to the sensorial overload encountered in Naples. The capital ranked lowest in her hierarchy of sensory pleasure due to its cacophonous sounds and displeasing sights, which she witnessed out of duty to her role as a queen consort. Rotation between palaces in and outside of the city created a contrasted experience between these sensory regimes, giving rise to heightened sense of hierarchy. From her written descriptions of such experiences, it is possible to see how she intimately connected sense and space during her early reign in Naples-Sicily. The combination of sense and space affected the queen’s own actions at court from deferring attendance at demanding public Cockaigne events to seek-

82 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 55, fols. 228r–228v, Maria Carolina to Marie Therese, 12 November 1793.

83 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 55, fols. 224v–225r, Maria Carolina to Marie Therese, 5 November 1793.

84 HHStA, HA, SB, K. 54, fol. 84r, Maria Carolina to Marie Therese, 2 December 1793.

85 Goudie, *Wax Portrait Bust*, 2013, 63.

ing solace and rest along the coast and in her own quarters at Caserta. In order to trace fully the impact of spatial dimensions within early modern courts, such considerations of the senses and their involvement within the construction of spatial preferences and hierarchies is necessary.

At the same time, imagined spaces performed an important part of Maria Carolina's spatial landscape. Such mental journeys, stimulated by material objects, opens us a novel dimension for studying the effects of gift-giving and interdynastic bonds during the eighteenth century and beyond.⁸⁶ The sensory connotations of such gifts imparted an additional dimension to the objects other than the expressions of admiration or friendly sentiments. In Maria Carolina's case, wax busts of her close family provided her with a modicum of emotional reassurance as well as a visual-haptic stimulus for imaging her proximity to her loved ones at foreign courts. Sensory surrogates such as these life-like wax busts served as emotional reminders and bridged the physical gulf between Naples and Vienna through the senses. The sensory significance of such objects exchange between royal courts expands the meanings of noble gift reciprocation. For the queen of Naples-Sicily, these tangible gifts reflected another sensorial dimension to her spatial preference. By wishing to be around such objects, she ordered her own space according to these material gifts.

The senses played an important role within the construction of early modern court spaces. Urban environments provided startling scenes and backdrops for elites seeking recreation or as arenas for childrearing. By contrast, Maria Carolina's preferences demonstrate the wider noble pursuit of pleasure in quiet spaces and in zones connoted with health.⁸⁷ Maria Carolina's own system of spatial preferences likely conformed to the environmental tastes of other elites, but her written accounts of her experiences in Neapolitan residences highlight the clear connection she held between the senses and space. For Maria Carolina, moving between royal residences offered varying levels of comfort and discomfort according to the sensory imprints she formed of each location. Future discussions of the physical dimensions of European courts may wish to be attentive to the sensory descriptions of the built environment espoused by court actors. In doing so, the sensory spaces of early modern courts become a clear factor in the decisions and functions of court inhabitants.

86 For a consideration of the political and dynastic meanings of royal gifts, see Michael Yonan, *Portable Dynasties. Imperial Gift-Giving at the Court of Vienna in the Eighteenth Century*, in: *The Court Historian* 14/2 (2009), 177–188.

87 For the use of enclosed gardens as such spaces, see Paula Henderson, *Gardens*, in: Erin Griffey (ed.), *Early Modern Court Culture*, London 2022, 156–171.