

Luisa de Carvajal in Anglo-Spanish Contexts, 1605–14

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This article reexamines the life of Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza, a Spanish noblewoman who traveled to London in 1605 hoping to be martyred in service of the Catholic faith. By placing her at the intersection of a series of international, intra- and interconfessional tensions created by the sustained religious division of post-Reformation England, Carvajal emerges as a sophisticated political actor. She offers not only a unique account of female Catholic agency and opposition in early Stuart England, but also a lens through which to view the nature of religious identity and division in a period of Anglo-Spanish peace.

INTRODUCTION

SINCE JOHN AVELING discovered the remarkable number of Catholic households in the North of England that contained a conformist husband and a recusant wife, and John Bossy characterized the English Catholic community as something of a “matriarchy,” the prominent role of women in sustaining the cause of English Catholicism after the Reformation has been well known.¹ Yet, “matriarchy” has been used to indicate the household-based, apolitical, private character of post-Reformation English Catholicism, minimizing the role of women in publicly resisting the English state. The depiction of female recusancy as a “natural division of labour in the management of dissent” is here complicated by the number of Catholic women who did indeed come into

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¹ Aveling; Bossy, 1973; quotation in Bossy, 1976, 153.

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conflict with the Protestant authorities.² While these collisions with the state are occasionally captured in the formal records of prosecution for separatism, little is known about the vast majority of these women; and even in the better documented cases, the lives and opinions of English Catholic women have been passed down, for the most part, in texts written by men. This certainly applies to the women of the middling sort who played such a prominent role in and around York—their sufferings were recorded in texts written and collected by men for a variety of polemical and pietistical purposes. Even for the famed Margaret Clitherow (1556–86), little would be known of her life and death but for the hagiographic account produced by her confessor, John Mush (ca. 1551–ca. 1613). The activities of leading figures higher up the social scale, like the Countess of Arundel (1557–1630) or Lady Magdalen Montague (1538–1608), are recorded primarily in the accounts written about them after their deaths by their confessors and spiritual counselors. Reading these priestly hagiographies against the grain, and across a variety of contexts, can reveal a great deal—including how their subjects' actions might be viewed, not only as evidence of sanctity, but also as semipublic agitation.³ Still, it has proven difficult to recover the voices of these women in reconstructing their role in the wider Catholic cause.

This article will consider the life of one woman whose activities are known through her own words—expressed in a collection of letters that describe her experiences, aspirations, and intentions to a range of her contemporaries, letters collected and preserved as part of an unsuccessful attempt to secure her canonization. That woman was Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza (1566–1614), a Spanish noblewoman who arrived in England in April 1605, hoping, as she claimed, to be martyred in the service of the Catholic faith.⁴

As a member of the Mendoza lineage, Carvajal belonged to one of the most powerful families in Spain. Her father had been a ruling official of the city of León, and her mother was distantly related to the royal favorite, Francisco Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas (1553–1625), the duke of Lerma. Her cousin was married to Don Rodrigo Calderón (1576–1621), later count of Olivía, who served as Lerma's secretary. When orphaned at age six, Carvajal was put into the care of her great-aunt, María Chacón (d. 1576), the governess of the royal children. Living at Las Descalzas Reales, Carvajal acted as playmate to the Infanta Isabella (1566–1633), who would later rule over the Spanish

² Walsham, 1993, 80–81 (quotation at 81). Questier, 2013, 293, demonstrates that of the prisoners of conscience in York Castle in 1599–1600, over one-third were women.

³ For a successful exercise in reading against the grain in this manner, see Lake and Questier, 2019.

⁴ Carvajal, 2:42–43. I am using the edition of Carvajal's letters edited by Glyn Redworth.

Netherlands as archduchess of Austria. After the death of Chacón, she spent the remainder of her adolescence with her uncle, Don Francisco Hurtado de Mendoza (ca. 1532–91), the marquis of Almazán, under whose influence she was subjected to harsh religious mortification. While extreme, even for Golden Age Spain, the physical punishments apparently deepened her devotion. In her early twenties, Carvajal dedicated her life to her fervent faith, took vows of poverty, and moved into a small house next to the Jesuit headquarters in Madrid, and later, near the English College at Valladolid. In 1598, Carvajal took a vow to “seek out all those opportunities of martyrdom.”⁵ She used her high connections and a hefty donation to the English College to gain permission to travel to England with the Jesuits and began her journey in January 1605.⁶ There, her activities centered on attempts to stiffen the resolve of English Catholics in the face of the threats and blandishments of the state, in particular the oath of allegiance. She remained fascinated, even fixated, on martyrdom—persuading English Catholics to stand firm and embrace a martyr’s fate, collecting and preserving as many of the slaughtered martyrs’ bodies as she could, and smuggling the remains out of the country to be preserved as relics. Intermittently, she professed her own desire to suffer a martyr’s fate.

Whatever her aspirations to the contrary, Carvajal did not achieve a martyr’s crown; she died in her bed nine years after her arrival in England from a bout of illness brought on by a brief imprisonment in the Gatehouse. It was not quite the death she had envisioned when she wrote of “sweet manacles, coveted noose,” that “holocaust burnt in a thousand flames,” but nevertheless her sacrifice was unofficially recognized by the Jesuits and her body was displayed on the high altar in the Spanish ambassador’s London chapel before being sent onto Madrid.⁷ In 1625, an investigation into Carvajal’s sanctity was begun, and though the effort ultimately failed, it led to the systematic collection of nearly 180 letters penned by Carvajal between 1598 and 1613, along with a number of poems, a spiritual autobiography, and copies of her various vows. Carvajal thus offers a record entirely in her own voice, presenting an exceptional account of the utterly unexceptional (though not uncontroversial) tradition of female agency and opposition in post-Reformation England—an account that can be set against the reaction to her activities by both the Protestant authorities and various strands of English Catholic, and indeed Spanish, opinion.

Carvajal is worth revisiting for two further reasons. First, as a Spanish noblewoman living in London, Carvajal embodies a continued historiographical interest in understanding English Catholic affairs within an international

⁵ Rhodes, 2000, 119.

⁶ For Carvajal’s life in Spain, see Redworth, 6–95.

⁷ Carvajal’s spiritual sonnet no. 43 in Rhodes, 2000, 180.

political and cultural system, centered as much on Madrid, Paris, and Rome as on London.⁸ Relatedly, it has been argued that English Catholicism can only be depicted properly in terms of constant movement between, and interaction with, various centers of Catholic activity on the Continent.⁹ Given the well-understood role of the seminaries in sustaining a regular supply of English Catholic priests, the role of lay men and, especially, women in sustaining these connections has only lately begun to receive due attention.¹⁰ Here, the direction of Carvajal's mobility can stretch the conceptualization of this international lay activism. Second, Carvajal's very public acts of defiance in the face of the repressive activities of the English regime and her capacity for epistolary self-promotion speak to a recent scholarly interest in the role of English Catholics in an emergent politics of the post-Reformation public sphere and, in particular, in the performative politics of martyrdom.¹¹

Still, many existing accounts of Carvajal insist on seeing her as a victim of patriarchy, largely depriving her actions of any sort of public or political significance. Here, modern scholarship follows in the footsteps of four hundred years of hagiography which has focused on Carvajal's pursuit of martyrdom. The result is a version of her life contained within familiar archetypes of private female religiosity, the stain of worldly or political concerns effaced to better establish her sanctity.¹² Her desire for martyrdom has been seen as providing the key to her entire mission—characterized as a sort of death wish induced by the abuse she suffered at the hands of her uncle. What Carvajal herself saw as purging spiritual discipline is here organized under the sign of prurient abuse and her subsequent desire for martyrdom is then psychologized away as a mission, either to cleanse her “problematic experiences with her uncle,” or relatedly, to demonstrate her “resistance of the dominance of male power.”¹³ Yet,

⁸ This is perhaps the crucial lesson revealed by Questier, 2019.

⁹ Corens.

¹⁰ Weber.

¹¹ Dillon; Lake and Questier, 1996; Lake and Pincus.

¹² See Muñoz; Abad; Pinillos Iglesias; Rees.

¹³ Rhodes, 2000, 4–6 (quotation at 4); González, 270. See also, Rhodes, 1998, which effectively places Carvajal in the context of Counter-Reformation female activism but remains focused on the details of her childhood trauma and eventual liberation. Cruz, 1992 and 2004 draw on concepts of female subjectivity, borrowed from psychologist Jessica Benjamin, who describes the relation of women's desire to the question of power. Redworth situates Carvajal in an English context but often minimizes the public, political dynamics of her mission by remaining preoccupied with her private motivations for death, for which he likewise gestures toward the abuse she suffered at a young age. Yet, as Pando Canteli, 2010, 210, argues, the evidence scarcely suggests that Carvajal's mental world was so circumscribed, as her “personal choice of religious martyrdom is problematized by her deep political concern.”

pathologizing her life and her motivations in this way effectively strips her of agency and elides the very clear political aims and intentions that colored her project, making it difficult to reconstruct the nature and significance of Carvajal's mission as it would have been understood by Carvajal herself and by her contemporaries in England and Spain.

To be clear, the aim of this article is not to replace an analysis centered on identity and gender dynamics with one centered either on religion or politics. It is apparent that Carvajal's mission can only be explained by her status as, not merely a woman, but as a Spanish noblewoman with high standing and connections. Her project is unintelligible outside the frame provided by the highly gendered norms of both Spanish Catholic spirituality and English Catholic activism—both of which were pulled together by Carvajal into the service of an uncompromising, rigorist Counter-Reformation agenda that enjoyed vocal, though far from majority, support among English and Spanish Catholics.¹⁴ But equally, her mission was enabled by, and can only be explained in terms of, specific political forces and tensions, both in England and in Spain, and Carvajal's own determination to exploit these tensions to advance her own politico-religious agenda—the realization of which was at least as significant to her as any drive toward martyrdom, and the roots of which cannot be reduced to any trauma suffered during her youth. My intention, then, is to combine different modes of analysis, different sorts of structures—centered on gender, religion, and politics—in order to restore a rounded coherence to Carvajal's project, and in so doing, restore to her some of the control over her own destiny which centuries of Catholic hagiography, and more recently, scholarly psychologizing have denied her.

The interpretive aims of this article, however, are not limited to Carvajal herself. On the contrary, I argue that a properly contextualized account of her mission has as much to reveal about female Catholic activism as it does about dissension within the English Catholic community during the reign of James I (r. 1603–25); the nature of relations between that community and the English Protestant state; and the shifting alignments and internal workings of both the English and Spanish political systems during Europe's Short Peace (1595–1620). Indeed, Carvajal emerges not only as a dynamic actor in her own right, but as lens through which to view the international, intra- and inter-confessional tensions created by the sustained religious division of post-Reformation England.

¹⁴ For female Spanish spirituality, see Lehfeldt. Carvajal's religio-political agenda mirrors that of Robert Parsons, who took an interest in her mission from afar; on her journey to London, she stayed with Parsons's sister for a month in Saint-Omer. For Parsons's political thought, see Holmes, 129–223.

CARVAJAL AND THE ENGLISH CATHOLIC COMMUNITY

Carvajal arrived in England in April 1605 and was passed between Catholic households until the failure of the infamous plot to blow up king and parliament in November 1605 forced her to seek refuge with the Spanish ambassador, Don Pedro de Zúñiga (1560–1631), in the Barbican.¹⁵ Carvajal noted the charged atmosphere left in the wake of uncharged gunpowder: “Catholics are called dogs to their faces, in their ears, with every step they take.”¹⁶ Rumors spread of an impending parliamentary crackdown. In June 1606, the *Act for the better discovering and repressing of Popish Recusants* was published—legislation which reinforced and added to the existing Elizabethan penalties for non-attendance, primarily, on conviction, the levying of a fine of twenty pounds each month, or, in lieu of payment of the accumulating fines, the sequestration of two-thirds of the recusant’s property.¹⁷

The Act also contained a new oath of allegiance, which required individuals to swear that James was the “lawful and rightful King,” and that the pope had no power to authorize his deposition.¹⁸ The oath could be tendered to all convicted or indicted recusants over the age of eighteen and the refusal to swear could trigger the penalties of *praemunire*—the forfeiture of all property and indefinite imprisonment. There has been considerable dispute over the intentions behind the oath and the extent to which it was actually implemented—with some historians claiming, in line with the Jacobean state’s defense of the oath, that it was only intended to target real traitors and was not applied on purely religious terms.¹⁹ However, as Michael Questier has demonstrated, the oath, requiring subscribers to declare the doctrine of papal deposing power “impious and heretical,” was not a simple civil obedience test and many moderate Catholic loyalists felt unable to swear on religious grounds.²⁰

Carvajal’s reports of midnight raids, street-stalking pursuivants, and disease-ridden prisons crowded with ordinary Catholics can serve to support the claim that the oath, whether or not it was intended to be broadly persecutory, certainly was felt to have that effect. She describes the suffering of the London Catholic community in detail, combating the idea, held alike by contemporary Continentals and some historians, that just because “blood is not running in the streets, or Catholics are not hanging from the gibbets each month like thieves,”

¹⁵ Carvajal, 1:114.

¹⁶ Carvajal, 1:111–12.

¹⁷ Tanner, 88 (3 Jac.1 c.4).

¹⁸ Tanner, 90–91 (3 Jac.1 c.4).

¹⁹ Sommerville.

²⁰ Questier, 2008, 1138–39.

that they were not being persecuted.²¹ Her letters consistently depict a city so “overrun with searches” that Catholics could not find “a moment’s rest, relief or security.”²² This is not to claim that the authorities were interested in (or indeed capable of) rounding up every recusant, but strings of seemingly random searches and arrests instilled a real sense of fear at the prospect of being faced with the oath. As Carvajal wrote, there was “no one who” was “not quaking in their boots . . . as the punishment for refusal is perpetual imprisonment and the confiscation of all one’s wealth and possessions by the king.”²³

Despite the severity of statutory enforcement, Pope Paul V (r. 1605–21) issued a breve in September 1606 denouncing the swearing of the oath, declaring that it “cannot be taken without wrong to the Catholic Faith, and the salvation of your soules.” He encouraged his English flock to “undergo all kind of cruel Torments whatsoever, yea and constantly endure Death itself,” rather than “offend the Majesty of God.”²⁴ For many English Catholics suffering those “cruel torments,” the consequences of such an uncompromising position proved unappealing, and some expressed a real frustration that the pope “should so little regard [their] afflictions,” as the “axe” lay over their heads, ready “to fall if [they] refuse.”²⁵ To avoid utter ruin, then, a “great number of them” were willing to take the oath, and further, there were clerics who advocated that position.²⁶ One such cleric was the papally appointed archpriest, George Blackwell (1547–1612), who was induced to swear after “close imprisonment” and a series of examinations overseen by Archbishop Richard Bancroft (1544–1610) in June 1607.²⁷ Eager to publicize this high-profile defection, the regime published an open letter penned by Blackwell in which he argued that by taking the oath, the Catholics could “shake off the false and grievous imputations of Treason, & Treacheries,” and in so doing might gain the “increase of many comforts.”²⁸ The pope dug in after Blackwell’s public disobedience—a second breve was issued in August 1607 and Blackwell was replaced as archpriest by George Birkhead (1549–1614).²⁹

²¹ Carvajal, 1:296.

²² Carvajal, 2:61. For the escalation of penal enforcement after the assassination of Henry IV in May 1610, see Larkin and Hughes, 1:249; Carvajal, 2:135, 149–50.

²³ Carvajal, 2:113.

²⁴ Foulis, 716–17.

²⁵ Questier, 1998, 123.

²⁶ Carvajal, 2:113.

²⁷ Blackwell, 21.

²⁸ Blackwell, 21, 25. Blackwell’s defection was a massive polemical victory for the regime; reflecting this, his letter was published by the royal printer, Robert Barker.

²⁹ Questier, 1997, 313.

Carvajal had no sympathy for those who decided to submit and swear. Rather, in taking a calculated stand against the oath, she made a pitch to the English Catholic community for a future of Catholicism that did not include concessions to a heretical regime. She vocally condemned those who succumbed to take the oath as “weak and timid” and warned they were “hurling their souls into mortal danger.”³⁰ In weighing the choice between risking their eternal souls and their estates or temporal freedom, they judged wrongly: “such is their love of themselves . . . that after considering it most carefully they make up their minds to venture their salvation—that is, to destroy it totally—rather than put up with the life that Catholics lead.”³¹ She offered biting critiques of these individuals who, in her judgment, feared “God neither slightly nor greatly,” and who thought “that even something less than an apple will serve to placate Him (as if He were a child) for the infinite number of ways in which they insult Him.” The “black oath” caused the “ruin of many weak souls.”³²

In Carvajal’s estimation, what these weak souls needed was an example of constancy. Carvajal herself was not subject to the penalties imposed upon lay Catholics and clerics. As a woman, she was afforded some security, a result more of informal misogyny than legal protection. She noted that the authorities often took “girls to be stupid or just not important” and thus would “just leave them be.”³³ Some women were able to use this to their advantage. When Elizabeth Vaux was presented with the oath after being arrested on charges of priest harboring in early 1612, she played dumb, replying that “it was not anything she understood.”³⁴ However, a consideration of the post-Reformation tradition of Catholic female activism that Vaux and Carvajal inhabited reveals that her gender was a far from foolproof protection. Rather, gender both constrained and afforded action to these women as they maneuvered between converging assumptions of female Catholic religiosity and the wider authority structures of the Protestant state.³⁵ In April 1611, Carvajal remarked that “the persecution of women has been started up again,” and that even the wives of earls are put “in jail if they do not attend church or refuse to take the oath.”³⁶ In December 1612, she describes “nine or ten very rich ladies and women of noble birth”

³⁰ Carvajal, 2:113.

³¹ Carvajal, 2:191.

³² Carvajal, 2:201.

³³ Carvajal, 1:228.

³⁴ Carvajal, 2:190. See also McClure, 1:337.

³⁵ Pando Canteli, 2010, 133–34.

³⁶ Carvajal, 2:136.

being arrested in the provinces for not taking the oath.³⁷ Wealthy, perhaps conformist, husbands could then be forced to pay what was, in effect, a ransom. Even Vaux's imprisonment demonstrates this interplay—it led to the return of her son from Flanders, whereupon the young Lord Edward Vaux's (1588–1661) own refusal of the oath triggered the penalties of *praemunire* in May 1612.³⁸

In conjunction with her gender, Carvajal's foreign (and high-born) status protected her from the threat of search and arrest, as those “not born within this king's dominions” were generally exempt and pursuivants would need “a unique order or warrant” to take action against her, particularly due to her connections with the Spanish ambassador's household.³⁹ Indeed, Carvajal recognized that her only real chance at violent persecution was from the Londoners she provoked.⁴⁰ For this reason, her vocal agitation against the oath garnered the enmity of some of her co-religionists who recognized it was an easy thing for one standing outside the strictures of the law to rebuke the sufferer. Carvajal noted the chilly reception, reporting that when she “encourage[d] them not to weaken,” some Catholics protested that she was able to “keep [her] spirits up” only because she did not “suffer or lose [her] estate,” and so was “safe to speak out.”⁴¹

Carvajal, then, used her protected status to co-opt those who could suffer into her pitch directed at the London Catholic community. She did this through a series of highly orchestrated and carefully timed visits to imprisoned priests. While these visits have often been reduced to the work of a holy woman offering succor to the suffering, Carvajal was, arguably, performing a more sophisticated task. Grim and manipulative as it may appear, she put immense pressure on condemned priests to resist the oath, which typically would be offered to them in exchange for a *de facto* stay of punishment (or at least, stay of execution). In doing so, she asked them to go boldly to their deaths as an example of defiance in the face of a persecutory regime.

Robert Drury (1567–1607) was the first priest to face execution after the 1606 act, and his decision in late February 1607 to either take or refuse the oath held particular importance as a public test of both the willingness of

³⁷ Carvajal, 2:281. According to 7 Jac.1 c.6, the husband of a recusant wife was liable to a 10 pound monthly fine and one-third of his property. Carvajal's comment on the provincial women arrested for not taking the oath is likely a reference to a number of female Catholic separatists arrested in Oxfordshire in 1612: see Petti, 209–10.

³⁸ Carvajal, 2:190, 205; McClure, 1:349.

³⁹ Carvajal, 1:227.

⁴⁰ Carvajal, 2:28, 38, 57.

⁴¹ Carvajal, 1:196.

potentially conformable Catholic clerics to hold the papal line and the willingness of the regime to let their necks answer for it. Drury was one of the thirteen priests who had signed the 1603 protestation of allegiance, and, as an avowed and proven loyalist, it was unclear how he would respond if personally tendered the oath.⁴² The polemical stakes were high, then, when the Recorder of London, Sir Henry Montague (ca. 1563–1642), offered Drury a reprieve upon the condition of swearing. In private, the priest allegedly indicated he would submit, but Montague deferred the official tendering, explaining later that because “the people” were “acquainted with [Drury’s] dangerous practices, his publicke submission and taking the oath, would the better witness his obedience and submission, and prove much more pleasing then any thing done in private.”⁴³ Drury, likely with the same understanding, refused to publicly swear when asked to do so in court two days later.

That afternoon, Carvajal visited Drury in prison, where she “spent a good while talking with him,” and trying to “encourage him and support him, as strongly as [she] could, not to allow himself to be overcome by the massive pressure they were bringing to bear on him to take the latest oath.” He apparently showed her a great deal of “love” and “more so to [her] than to any of the many others who came to see him.”⁴⁴ That he bravely went to his death the next morning, dressed in a cassock and biretta, allowed him to be claimed in the ongoing debate about the permissibility of taking the oath, offering an example of uncompromising refusal to concede to the heretics.

Drury was not the only priest who received a pre-gallows visit from Carvajal. In December 1610, she visited Thomas Somers (d. 1610) and John Roberts (1577–1610) in the hours before their sentencing, in order to “increase, perhaps, the heroic resolve of their spirits.” She reports that she stayed their nerves as they prepared to leave for court, where they successfully resisted the oath. With an execution scheduled for the following morning, Carvajal paid the jailer to allow them a “last supper” with more than twenty others—nearly all fellow prisoners awaiting the next court sitting, making this “just the time when shepherds should give their sheep an example of constancy and determination.”⁴⁵

⁴² Tierney, 3:clxxxviii–cxci.

⁴³ *A True Report of the Arraignment*, unpaginated [C^r–D2^r].

⁴⁴ Carvajal, 1:246.

⁴⁵ Carvajal, 2:134–36. Carvajal’s report is corroborated by Simon Houghton, Keeper of Newgate, who later admitted that the night before the executions, Roberts had dined with a Spanish gentlewoman: see The National Archives (hereafter TNA), SP 14/61, fol. 137^{r-v}, “The Examination of Simon Houghton.” Having been informed that “the old lady who is in the Spanish Ambassador’s house” visited “the prison and there supped with the priests,” James was likewise outraged: see TNA, SP 14/61, fol. 133^{r-v}, “Sir Thos. Lake to Salisbury.”

The purpose of these prison visits did not go unnoticed by the authorities; in particular, Carvajal caught the attention of a formidable enemy, the bishop of London, George Abbot (1562–1633). As Kenneth Fincham has demonstrated, Abbot's worldview was shaped by an "intense, even pathological, fear of popery," which dictated not only his obvious opposition to Rome, but also fostered a strong Hispanophobia, as he believed peace with Spain after 1604 had "produced lethargy, luxury, and security" among English Protestants.⁴⁶ He rejected compromise and promoted an aggressive Protestant foreign and domestic policy to counteract the ambitions of (inter)national Catholicism. Here, Abbot's position appears as a mirror image of Carvajal's own militant stance against accommodation.

In April 1611, Carvajal reported that in the days following the December executions of Somers and Roberts, Abbot got wind of her activities and was "convinced [she] had stiffened the martyrs' resolve to die."⁴⁷ Significantly, the bishop had much at stake on this double conviction. The trials might be seen as part of Abbot's bid for the recently vacated position of archbishop of Canterbury, proving himself a worthy successor of Richard Bancroft while also signaling an end to a policy of *de facto* toleration for certain priests who might be judged allies in the regime's struggle against the Jesuits.⁴⁸ In this context, Carvajal's elaborate making-a-martyr demonstration for the two condemned priests on the eve of their executions undermined the possibility of a conspicuous reversal on the oath and flagrantly celebrated Catholic defiance and public unity.

Incensed, Abbot "sent word that under no circumstances" was she to visit the imprisoned priests, and that, if she did, "the jailer would not let [her] out again."⁴⁹ When Abbot eventually "sent one of his pursuivants" to bring Carvajal before him, she viewed it as a "terrible effrontery on his part," because the English bishops were "not supposed to get involved with foreigners on religious matters."⁵⁰ She simply refused to answer the door, and because her house was next to the ambassador's, they did "not even bang on the door," and only continued "ringing the bell."⁵¹

Abbot's charge that Carvajal was exhorting these men to their deaths can hardly be denied, particularly because she was concurrently visiting imprisoned

⁴⁶ Fincham, 37.

⁴⁷ Carvajal, 2:136–37.

⁴⁸ Pollen, 146–47. Carvajal's report that Roberts had been arrested six times could be read as an indication of *de facto* toleration of a collaborationist priest: Carvajal, 2:134.

⁴⁹ Carvajal, 2:150.

⁵⁰ Carvajal, 2:137, 150.

⁵¹ Carvajal, 2:151.

priests who had sworn the oath, not to offer them comfort, but to vigorously rebuke and debate them. She accused Blackwell of setting up “a school for faint-hearts, lacking in spirit and virtue.”⁵² Having looked over his arguments in favor of swearing, she found them “all utter nonsense” and lamented that no one had been “strong enough to get him to see the light.”⁵³ Attempting that feat for herself, Carvajal visited Blackwell in the Clink to debate him over the issue. Glyn Redworth argues that “Luisa would not have crossed the Thames just to see an Archpriest she wrote off as unutterably foolish,” and frames her visit as sideshow to her “self-appointed mission to comfort the elderly Edward Gage of Bentley,” an oath-refusing gentleman imprisoned in the Clink for priest harboring.⁵⁴ Carvajal did indeed report that she visited Gage, but the importance of her confrontation with Blackwell should not be ignored. The timing of her visit was very deliberate; she called on the archpriest in the weeks before the second papal breve condemning the oath was expected to arrive. She pressed him on his disobedience, but Blackwell remained adamant, declaring that “not even twenty briefs would change his opinion, nor would anything on earth unless his holiness were to declare it an article of faith and do so to the universal church.” She left in frustration, telling “him one or two home truths, which stung him.”⁵⁵

As a witness to the persecution engendered by the oath of allegiance, Carvajal was not simply functioning as some sort of holy woman, offering care to the suffering. Rather, her coordinated spiritual assault on the imprisoned priests should be viewed as a sophisticated form of pitch-making to the London Catholic community, meant to encourage them to follow the example of the brave clerics—to reject any concession to a heretical regime, to reject a series of *soi-disant* loyalist options from within the Catholic community, to suffer in constancy, and to reap the rewards of eternal salvation. Here, Carvajal was entering into an ongoing debate about what Catholicism was, and was to be, in England—a debate being conducted between the state and its Catholic subjects and also between various strands of English Catholic opinion.

CARVAJAL AND THE JACOBAN REGIME

While outlining a clear vision of how English Catholics should behave under the thumb of a heretical regime, Carvajal was simultaneously conveying a

⁵² Carvajal, 1:307.

⁵³ Carvajal, 1:278.

⁵⁴ Redworth, 144.

⁵⁵ Carvajal, 1:293–94.

multilayered message to the Jacobean state and public: misrepresentations regarding the persecution of Catholics would not be suffered to stand, Protestant heresy would not go unchallenged, and covert Catholic networks would not remain hidden. Some of her more ostentatious affronts, previously attributed to erratic attempts to earn a martyr's crown, can be understood as highly orchestrated messaging, dictated by her adherence to a particularly uncompromising vision of a Catholic future in England and the future of England's relationship with the (Catholic) Continent.

First, Carvajal's interactions with the priests did not end with her exhortations of self-sacrifice in the London prisons, but extended to the scaffold and beyond as she worked to deliberately fashion their sacrifice into a polemically useful model of martyrdom through the production of bodily relics. Encouraging Somers and Roberts to bravely meet their end at Tyburn in December 1610, Carvajal then took charge of their bodies after death. "Father Roberts, minus one leg" and "half" of Somers's body were brought to Carvajal's home after being dug "from the pit into which they had been cast."⁵⁶ She rejoiced to "have such guests and to be able to serve them in their great need," and noted how their quartered remains "stood up straight like pieces of armour, and they were truly the arms with which joyful saints fought."⁵⁷ In early June 1612, she coordinated the recovery of the bodies of two more priests, Richard Newport (d. 1612) and William Scott (ca. 1579–1612). Three days after they were hanged, drawn, and quartered, Carvajal sent "some acquaintances" of hers to dig their buried bodies up in the night. She received their remains in "procession with a cross and burning candles," took four nights to clean and prepare them, and stored their bodies in her make-shift house chapel.⁵⁸

Carvajal was not unique in the pursuit of holy remains. A number of high-profile figures participated in the recovery of priests' bodies and the production of relics for a Continental market, including the Spanish ambassador Diego Sarmiento de Acuña (1567–1626), later the count of Gondomar, who orchestrated the recovery of the executed Thomas Maxfield (ca. 1585–1616) in July 1616.⁵⁹ Such grisly adoration is indicative of a (predominately) Catholic form of devotional practice centered on the thaumaturgic and intercessory power of

⁵⁶ Carvajal, 2:146, 157. See also Challoner, 2:39.

⁵⁷ Carvajal, 2:146.

⁵⁸ Carvajal, 2:206, 248.

⁵⁹ Camm, 1915, 57. The participation of foreign Catholic ambassadors in the relic trade continued through the 1640s. As Camm, 1901, 323, notes, the imperial ambassador Louis, Count Egmont, later Duke of Guelders (d. 1654), recovered parts of at least eleven martyrs while in England between 1640 and 1645.

these objects.⁶⁰ Yet Carvajal's actions should not be read only as acts of pious devotion, but also as pointed and public comments against state formulations of the proper form of Catholic loyalism. She worked to expose what she and others regarded as the fallaciousness of the regime's official gloss on the oath of allegiance and its claims about those who rejected it—refuting the notion that it was only dangerous traitors who were brought to book for noncompliance, and that the state was willing to leave room for loyal Catholics to exist in relative peace if they would offer outward displays of obedience and conformity. The role of the body in the political communication of state power is well theorized today and was understood in Carvajal's time.⁶¹ In a physical manifestation of the state's arguments regarding the oath, the priests were executed not for heresy, but for high treason, by laws instituted in the reign of Elizabeth and invoked after they refused the new oath. Their supposed offense was rendered highly visible through the treatment of their bodies—they were publicly hanged, drawn, and quartered, their heads placed on display around the city, and their remains buried under the intact corpses of criminals. The meaning of the macabre ritual was exceedingly legible to an early modern audience, and Carvajal worked to challenge this somatic messaging. Retrieving “what is our treasure and not theirs,” she treated the priests as martyrs, turned their quartered flesh into holy relics, and laid bare the contradictions of the state's violence.⁶²

That her participation in the recovery of remains was intended as a political challenge to the regime becomes most clear with the final body dug up for Carvajal—that of the priest John Almond (ca. 1577–1612) in December 1612. Contemporaries speculated that the English regime orchestrated the public butchering of Almond for the benefit of Elector Palatine Frederick V (1596–1632)—a gruesome display to confirm the distinctly Protestant policy turn for the distinctly Protestant Palgrave. With the execution taking place just twenty-two days before the elector's official betrothal to Princess Elizabeth Stuart (1596–1662), Carvajal alleged that they had “rushed [Almond's] case through, against their own customs and regulations,” and “without a word written down against him or even a single witness.”⁶³ With raised stakes came a heightened potential for subversion, and here Carvajal appears as a participant in a broader challenge to the state's representations regarding the persecution of Catholics.

⁶⁰ Redworth, 212; Rhodes, 2000, 22–23; Walsham, 2010.

⁶¹ For a historicized conceptualization of competing ideologies in dialogue at the scaffold (and after), see Lake and Questier, 1996.

⁶² Carvajal, 2:247–48.

⁶³ Carvajal, 2:292.

Before his death, Almond worked to undermine the state's gloss on the proceedings—at his court hearing he denied that he had made a defense of regicide and asserted that he would take “any oath of allegiance, if it contained nothing but allegiance.” He maintained this loyalist stance at Tyburn, where, before a crowd of nearly two thousand, Almond declared he had come there to die specifically “for the Catholic religion, and for Christ's cause.”⁶⁴ Following his execution, Carvajal recovered his body, “beating off the others who tried and who had made up their minds to die rather than leave him any longer in such an unworthy place.”⁶⁵ The competition over his remains might be taken to hint at the importance of Almond's body in the larger political context. Here, Carvajal offered an implicit challenge to the regime, transforming a traitor of state into a martyr of faith. She sent relics from the butchered body to Don Rodrigo Calderón, including flowers dipped in the blood of Almond's entrails, with a clear message against the state's representation of the persecution of Catholics: “It is up to the martyrs to avoid death,” but only “if they agree to acquiesce and stoop to the level of the heretic in something contrary to the Catholic faith.” This was a choice of death or a form of Catholic loyalism that was not Catholic at all. In rejecting the oath, these men exposed the contradictions of the regime's violence, deciding to “end their lives with great devotion and edification in public, for all to see.”⁶⁶

Not all shared her convictions, and she was confronted by a rival view within the Catholic community—one that endorsed the state gloss on the executed priests and argued that the refusal of the oath was neither sensible nor required. In this reading, the priests refused “the repeated offers of reprieve and pardon made by an indulgent authority and thus brought a deserved traitor's death down upon themselves.”⁶⁷ Carvajal claims that Blackwell scoffed at the sacrifice of an oath-refusing priest, George Gervase (1571–1608), reportedly saying, “Glorious martyr, you call him? Instead he deserves to be called a simple fellow who died for matters not declared by the Church and in which one can take the opposite point of view.”⁶⁸ Carvajal noted that “some priests” who found out about her recovery of bodies threatened her and “tried to scare [her] with the Council.” She reports that she “almost lost [her] temper with them over this,” as “not for all the world, or for ten lives of [her] own, would [she] have refused to welcome them.”⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Challoner, 2:47; Questier, 1998, 207; also Carvajal, 2:292.

⁶⁵ Carvajal, 2:293.

⁶⁶ Carvajal, 2:317.

⁶⁷ Lake and Questier, 1996, 71.

⁶⁸ Carvajal, 1:308.

⁶⁹ Carvajal, 2:157.

In the same way that she rejected compromise in the face of a persecuting regime, Carvajal rejected compromise in the face of a heretical religion. She counted it as her highest mission to battle the “against the error and blindness” of the English Protestants “with the most effective arguments” she could muster.⁷⁰ She took on this role of self-appointed truth teller with the understanding that her unique position offered a degree of protection that London Catholics lacked, preventing them from presenting a similar challenge. According to Carvajal, “lay Catholics either do not know how to or do not want to place themselves in such danger without being certain of results.” In contrast, she declared herself “only too willing to place the light before their eyes.”⁷¹

In early June 1608 Carvajal made a prodigiously public challenge to the Protestant faith while shopping at Cheapside, a busy market street filled with shopkeepers who, according to Carvajal, were “more obstinate in heresy than any other of the inhabitants” of London. Asking a young shop boy if he was a Catholic, Carvajal drew the attention of surrounding shopkeepers, who began to gather as she embarked on a “big discussion of the Catholic religion.” Over the next several hours, they touched upon “mass, priests and confession,” as well as “whether the Roman religion was the one true faith.” They also debated the recent execution of Gervase and his status as either a traitor or martyr. Carvajal reports that while “some listened with pleasure . . . others became angry, so much so that [she] sensed some danger.”⁷² The mistress of the shop “said it was a disgrace they tolerated [her] and that [she] was no doubt some Roman priest dressed up as a woman.”⁷³ Others accused of her being Scottish, due to her broken English. Significantly, the crowd’s charges attempted to strip her of her status as a woman and a Spaniard—the two elements of her identity that, together, afforded her protection.

Measuring the danger, she took her leave, brazenly “telling them not to react badly to the truths [she] was telling them out of charity.”⁷⁴ Redworth casts this incident partially as a miscalculation by Carvajal, who apparently had “made more enemies than she realized.”⁷⁵ It is arguable that here he underestimates Carvajal and her capacity for public and popular political activity. This should be read as a carefully orchestrated event—Cheapside was laden with interconfessional meaning. The thirteenth-century Cheapside Cross had become a contentious symbol and a space to project ideologies. Viewed as a vestige of old

⁷⁰ Carvajal, 2:294.

⁷¹ Carvajal, 2:11.

⁷² Carvajal, 2:2–3, 23.

⁷³ Carvajal, 2:2.

⁷⁴ Carvajal, 2:24.

⁷⁵ Redworth, 170.

religion, the cross fell victim to iconoclastic attacks in the mid- and late Elizabethan period. It also served as a site of Catholic veneration, with the Jesuit missionary Edmund Campion (1540–81) famously bowing before the cross when paraded to the Tower in 1581.⁷⁶ George Abbot had been a vocal opponent of Bishop Bancroft's restoration of the cross in 1600, speculating on the propensity of papists to "doe reverence before it."⁷⁷ Carvajal was well aware of the layered significance of Cheapside, as well as the religious bent of its shopkeepers. She had previously attempted to pray at the cross herself, inciting apprentice boys to strike at her and shout, "a papest a papest hang her hang her."⁷⁸

This event was clearly not one of miscalculation as she returned to the site of the debate about two weeks later, provoking some shopkeepers to follow her around, "wanting to see if [she] was talking about religion."⁷⁹ They surrounded Carvajal, constable in tow, and delivered her to Sir Thomas Bennett (1543–1627), the former Lord Mayor of London and alderman of the Lime Street Ward.⁸⁰ Before Bennett, the shopkeepers explained her offense and Carvajal admitted the general veracity of their report. She gave her full name and explained she was a Spanish woman living attached to the ambassador's household. Bennett asked about her "disciples and doctrine," and they discussed the fate of Gervase and the legitimacy of Queen Elizabeth.⁸¹

Here, Carvajal can be seen attempting to elevate the impact and publicity of her affront. The news of a detained priest in disguise drew a crowd of two hundred or more at Bennett's door, giving her performance an audience much larger than the incident that had provoked the arrest.⁸² Moreover, in repeating the content of the debate to a magistrate, her challenge to Protestant error extended from the marketplace to the Council, where her "interrogation and papers" were subsequently sent.⁸³ Finally, by leaning on her connection to Ambassador Zúñiga, she raised the stakes of the encounter. The Council was eager to avoid a diplomatic incident with Spain given the concurrent

⁷⁶ See Stow, 1:266; Budd.

⁷⁷ George Abbot, *Cheap-side Crosse censured and condemned* (1641), as quoted in Holland, 175.

⁷⁸ Encarnación, "Unnamed Companion," as quoted in Redworth, 167–68; cf. Carvajal, 1:213.

⁷⁹ Carvajal, 2:13.

⁸⁰ For Bennett, see Beaven, 1:176 and 2:177. Carvajal reports being taken to Bennett's home, which was in St. Olave Old Jewry, between Cheapside and Lothbury: see TNA, PROB 11, 151/286, "Will of Sir Thomas Bennett."

⁸¹ Carvajal, 2:13–15, at 13.

⁸² Carvajal, 2:3.

⁸³ Carvajal, 2:18.

Catholic-appropriated rebellion in Ireland, making the timing of Carvajal's affront highly suggestive.⁸⁴ Zúñiga was likewise eager to reduce the impact of her public challenge, quietly paying off her jailing costs while forbidding anyone in his household, save the ambassadorial chaplain, to visit her during her four-day stint in the Counter prison.⁸⁵ Upon her release, Zúñiga berated Carvajal, asking her to "imagine what they would say in Spain and Flanders about [her] having been taken prisoner for talking religion with a handful of shopkeepers."⁸⁶ He promptly carted her off to his summer home in Highgate, where she lived for the next year, ostensibly for her own protection, but also likely in the hope that she could do less damage in the suburbs of London.

However, her activities in the London suburb of Spitalfields, where she resided semi-permanently after mid-1611, would send a pointed message to her now attentive state audience: covert networks of Catholic practice would not remain hidden. Removed from the direct protection of the Spanish ambassador, she established a quasi-monastic female religious community, imagining her home as a "castle set right in the face of the enemies of the holy church . . . defying them one and all."⁸⁷ While she had always kept several English women in her Barbican household, in Spitalfields she had hopes of expansion—hopes which were dampened by the impediments of the devil, who, she claimed, "tries as hard as he can to see that no opportunity exists here to practice perfection nor profess the way of the Gospel through public example."⁸⁸ She desired to turn her household into this public example of Catholic religiosity—if not as an ordered nunnery, then as a Spanish-style *beaterio* for pious laywomen.⁸⁹ Carvajal explicitly referred to her home as "a little convent," and painted it as "one fortress in England against the infernal hordes wreaking such destruction

⁸⁴ Carvajal, 2:6, 37. The Ulster-based rebellion led by Sir Cahir O'Doherty (1587–1608) began in April 1608, seven months after the Flight of the Earls. In early July, the Venetian ambassador to England, Zorzi Gustinian (fl. 1605–18), reported that the Earl of Tyrone's (ca. 1550–1616) intercepted letters had encouraged "the rebels in Ireland to carry on the rising" and hold out "hopes of speedy and sound assistance." Accordingly, while the rising was "almost crushed," King James, "putting together the Papal breves condemning the oath of allegiance, these new risings in Ireland, and the way in which Tyrone is treated by the Pope," was apparently "convinced that his Holiness [was] nursing very serious ill will towards him": Brown, 147–48.

⁸⁵ Carvajal was most likely taken to the Poultry Compter, also known as the Poultry Counter, in Cheap Ward. See Carvajal, 2:16–17.

⁸⁶ Carvajal, 2:27.

⁸⁷ Carvajal, 2:247, 170.

⁸⁸ Carvajal, 2:178.

⁸⁹ Redworth, 43–45; Lehfeldt, 208–11.

upon souls,” wherein “the soldiers resisting and opposing them are a few poor maidens.”⁹⁰ For Carvajal, her “soldiers” were not just so in a spiritual sense—they professed themselves ready to resist a siege against their London “castle.” She explained that if pursuivants should arrive, the women would be ready to “box their ears good and proper . . . not to mention going at them with [their] trusty sticks.”⁹¹

While she prepared for a hypothetical siege, Carvajal praised other Catholics who proved willing to, quite literally, combat persecution. Around Christmastime 1611, George Gage (ca. 1582–1638), an English Catholic in her circle, was being conducted to an appearance before Abbot by four pursuivants when a pair of Gage’s acquaintances freed him, injuring two of the guards and tossing a third into the Thames.⁹² In February 1612, Carvajal reported that Gage had a second altercation with pursuivants, during which one of his companions—though a “schismatic”—“gave the pursuivants and their lads a real thrashing.” He took the sword off of one, broke it into pieces, and “beat him severely with the pummel before making him run off.” This incident served both Abbot’s and Carvajal’s mirrored positions on Catholic agitation. Abbot used Gage’s public affront as an opportunity to prove to James that “the Catholics were growing rapidly in number, boldness, and liberty,” while Carvajal viewed the public nature of the occasion with delight, asserting that “this fellow did the right and proper thing.” She wished for more public shows of resistance, but lamented that most “poor Catholics dare not raise an eyebrow, because they cart them off, ruin them even more, and scatter them all around.”⁹³ Others in the community shied away from confrontation, but Carvajal took the “battle . . . to the enemy here in the fields, on the edge of London,” where her household stood as a visible challenge.⁹⁴ Abbot would soon take full advantage of this challenge as he attempted to use Carvajal to pitch an aggressive Protestant policy to the king.

In 1612, Zúñiga returned on special assignment to inform James of the double Bourbon-Hapsburg matches, stoking public anxiety.⁹⁵ When Zúñiga visited the Flemish ambassador in Spitalfields, Carvajal’s neighborhood filled “with spies and lookouts and other such villains” on the assumption the Catholic representatives were “plotting and making trouble.”⁹⁶ Carvajal and

⁹⁰ Carvajal, 2:202.

⁹¹ Carvajal, 2:243, 256.

⁹² Questier, 1998, 43n15.

⁹³ Carvajal, 2:191.

⁹⁴ Carvajal, 2:183.

⁹⁵ For the tensions surrounding the 1612 matches, see Senning, 2019. Cf. Carvajal, 2:192–93.

⁹⁶ Carvajal, 2:242.

the ladies in her household drew particular attention, as they “often went to see [Zúñiga] at the Flemish ambassador’s house and would walk all the way there in a group.”⁹⁷ The sight of a group of possibly six or eight women dressed in distinctly modest gowns and parading around Spitalfields would have been an unwelcome reminder of popish nuns, and “whoever spotted [them] must have thought the Catholics were meeting. . . with the intention of getting up to no good.”⁹⁸ Carvajal’s cousin-in-law, Don Rodgrio Calderón, expressed worry that she was being reckless, prompting her to indignantly respond: “I do not understand why your lordship thinks the house in Spitalfields is so awful. If I did not take such exceptional care to keep myself safe, you might well believe that these people would have already packed me off to heaven. But my calling requires me to take some risks.”⁹⁹

While the reprimands proved strong enough to stop Carvajal from calling on Zúñiga so conspicuously during the rest of his visit, her successive “risks” eventually led to her second arrest. On 24 September 1613, Carvajal wrote to Calderón that she had heard rumors that Archbishop Abbot wanted to have her arrested.¹⁰⁰ The rumors were true—he believed her to be a “Jesuitess,” and her “disciples” to be the same as they were “appareled in every respect as the Jesuits’ women.” Abbot considered it a “great scorn to the justice of the State” and directed them to be seized.¹⁰¹ On October 18, the recorder Henry Montague, a sheriff of London, and reportedly sixty pursuivants conducted an early morning raid on her home, detaining Carvajal and her women.¹⁰²

The circumstances of her arrest demonstrate the complex interaction between the local and international contexts within which Carvajal acted. The timing of Abbot’s action against Carvajal is most frequently attributed to the publication of the *Defensio Fidei Catholicae et Apostolicae contra Errores Anglicanae Sectae* (Defense of the Catholic and apostolic faith against the errors of the Anglican sect, 1613) by the Portuguese Jesuit Francisco Suárez (1548–1617) in June.¹⁰³ The *Defensio Fidei* not only offered a virulent attack on James’s own published defense of the oath of allegiance, but Suárez also asserted

⁹⁷ Carvajal, 2:237.

⁹⁸ Carvajal, 2:237. For the number of women, see Carvajal, 2:248; Hinds, 239.

⁹⁹ Carvajal, 2:277.

¹⁰⁰ Carvajal, 2:335.

¹⁰¹ Hinds, 239.

¹⁰² Carvajal, 2:341–42. For her arrest, see Fullerton, 262–88, which draws upon Luis Muñoz’s contemporary account.

¹⁰³ Redworth, 217; Senning, 1970, 49.

the primacy of papal jurisdiction over temporal princes and argued for popular sovereignty over divine right kingship.¹⁰⁴

Infuriated, James was allegedly ready to let his anti-papist bulldog, Archbishop Abbot, “off the leash” to strike “indiscriminately at Catholics.”¹⁰⁵ It is evident the king was enraged at the blatant and personal attack issued by Suárez and that he connected Carvajal specifically to the *Defensio Fidei*. He complained that she had been in his kingdom for nine years “without doing anything else save enticing the souls of [his] subjects away from the faith” and toward “papistry, whose doctrine teaches that vassals can deny obedience and due loyalty to their kings and princes . . . whenever their sovereign lords are not of the Roman faith.” This doctrine, James claimed, aligned with the teaching of Suárez, who “deprives kings and princes in every respect of the security of their subjects.”¹⁰⁶ Carvajal, indeed, attributed her own arrest to the “king’s rage at Father Suárez’s book,” noting, “because I am Spanish . . . he was going to make me pay for it.”¹⁰⁷ However, James had known about the *Defensio Fidei* for over a year when he gave warrant for Carvajal’s arrest. Sir John Digby (1580–1653), the English ambassador in Madrid, had sent word of a book written by the “Jesuite Suarez . . . againste yo[ur] Maj[esty]” as early as September 1612, and had forwarded sheets of the book as it was printed, sending five of the six books to James by late May 1613.¹⁰⁸ While it is possible that the continuous arrival of sheets from Digby had kept James at a “boiling point,” the English king did not appear poised to erupt.¹⁰⁹

Rather, it appeared quite the opposite. In an intercepted letter dated 5 October 1613 (NS), Gondomar, the newly arrived Spanish ambassador in London, describes a hunting trip with the king during which James confided in him that he was so convinced of the goodwill of Philip III (r. 1598–1621) and his good “cavallero,” the duke of Lerma, that he “now grewe to be persuaded that those that told him the king of Spayne was not his true and sincere friend abused him,” and that they “angered him when thei told him so.” He

¹⁰⁴ Senning, 1970, 49.

¹⁰⁵ Redworth, 217.

¹⁰⁶ Loomie, 2:19.

¹⁰⁷ Carvajal, 2:345.

¹⁰⁸ Digby initially reported the book in a letter dated 13 September 1612 (TNA, SP 94/19, fols. 147^r–148^r), and forwarded the first sheets on December 7 (TNA, SP 94/19, fols 186^r–187^v). The first book of the *Defensio Fidei* was sent to James in early January 1613 (TNA, SP 94/19, fol. 247^{r-v}) and the second book by late February (TNA, SP 94/19, fols. 281^r–283^v). Digby dispatched the fifth book (of six) in early June and noted he would send the final part in the next few days (TNA, SP 94/19, fol. 387^r).

¹⁰⁹ Redworth, 217.

assured Gondomar that he would make “his council acquainted” with his position, and particularly would “quiet and moderate the minds” of those who were “neyther well affected to the business of spayne nor the peace.” With these assurances, Gondomar thought, “yt is to bee hoped [James] will growe more moderate in the persecution of Catholickes, and that they may hereafter live with more quiet & securitie.”¹¹⁰ Within weeks of Carvajal’s arrest, then, James was not acutely (or indiscriminately) ill-disposed toward his Catholic subjects.

The question thus becomes less what drove the king to let the archbishop off his leash, but rather what drove Abbot to take action against Carvajal specifically in mid-October.¹¹¹ For those disinclined toward peace, with either Spain or domestic Catholics, early autumn 1613 held ominous signs—as James grew closer to Gondomar, the king’s ascendant young favorite, Robert Carr (1587–1645), became increasingly entangled with the Hispanophile and, according to Abbot, crypto-Catholic, group of councilors organized around Thomas Howard (1561–1626), earl of Suffolk, and Henry Howard (1540–1614), earl of Northampton. While Carr had been loosely connected with the pro-parliamentary faction led by Henry Wriothlesley (1573–1624), the earl of Southampton, by the summer of 1612 the favorite appeared to be warming to Northampton and the Howard candidate for the vacant secretary of state position, Sir Thomas Lake (1561–1630). In the month before Carvajal’s arrest, Carr’s flexible association with the Howard circle solidified—the favorite’s Southampton handler, Sir Thomas Overbury (ca. 1581–1613), died suspiciously on 14 September 1613 and eleven days later, Frances Howard (1590–1632) and Robert Devereux (1591–1646), the earl of Essex, were granted a marriage annulment. Frances, the daughter of Suffolk, had been Carr’s lover likely since 1612 and the pair were now free to marry.¹¹² This not only placed a pro-Spanish, Catholic-sympathetic group ever closer to James’s ear, it also led to a significant loss of favor for Abbot, who had vocally opposed the annulment, gaining the anger of the king, who condemned his archbishop’s arguments over the issue as “puritan.”¹¹³

As Gondomar would later describe, these “signs of [James’s] respect and good disposition towards the Catholics, had caused such resentment in the

¹¹⁰ TNA, SP 94/20, fols. 128^v–129^v, “Digby to James I.” For the dating of the intercepted letters, TNA, SP 94/20, fol. 135^r, “Digby to James I.”

¹¹¹ Senning, 1970, 49, valuably anticipates this argument.

¹¹² For Carr, see Bellany, 47–56. For Abbot’s opposition to the Howards, see Fincham, 47–48.

¹¹³ Howell, 2:794–804 (quotation at 795), contains Abbot’s objections to the Essex annulment and James’s circulated response to his archbishop.

Archbishop of Canterbury and the Chancellor [Ellesmere (1540–1617)] and the enemies of Spain and generally for all puritans,” that they “met many times to discuss how they might succeed in diverting the king away from the good disposition that he had been showing.”¹¹⁴ In an attempt to cool James’s warming attitude toward Spain and English Catholics, and to recover his own footing at court after his public defiance over the Essex annulment, Abbot turned to the very thing that had arguably earned him the archbishopric: his propensity to expose and root out “the political dangers of popery.”¹¹⁵ Abbot and Ellesmere allegedly began to tell the king that “no trust could be placed in any Catholic prince and especially in [Philip III] since they were constantly plotting against his realm and the authority and security of his person.” Abbot connected Carvajal to this plotting, and asserted that she posed “considerable danger to [James’s] crown” and thus “begged him earnestly to command that she should be seized and punished.” The targeting of Carvajal in mid-October can then be seen as an attempt by Abbot and like-minded ministers to remind James of the threat of Catholicism, both international and domestic, and, according to Gondomar, to “endeavor to convince him as much as they could that he should revert to persecuting the Catholics with a fresh severity.”¹¹⁶

If Abbot intended a show of publicity by arresting Carvajal, in effect exposing that the Spanish peace had allowed the dangers of international Catholicism to come home to roost, she was able to turn this incident into an opportunity “much to God’s glory and the honour of Spain.”¹¹⁷ Despite the earlier insistence that her “soldiers” would violently resist arrest, there was no ear boxing or stick beating. The neighboring Flemish and Venetian ambassadors came to their aid, as did Gondomar, who quickly arrived from the Barbican. It was negotiated that Carvajal and her women would be permitted to travel in ambassadorial coaches—this created a real spectacle, as they were brought from “Spitalfields to Lambeth through the streets lined with justices and their officers on foot and horseback, to the amazement of the people.”¹¹⁸ The windows of the coaches were “kept open” and throngs gathered, allegedly “calling out, ‘English nuns, English nuns!’”¹¹⁹

Sending a strong message of foreign Catholic solidarity, Gondomar’s wife refused to leave Carvajal during much of the four days she spent in the Gatehouse.¹²⁰ Gondomar noted that “the Catholics and heretics [were] edified”

¹¹⁴ Loomie, 2:15–16.

¹¹⁵ Fincham, 40.

¹¹⁶ Loomie, 2:16.

¹¹⁷ Carvajal, 2:345.

¹¹⁸ Carvajal, 2:342.

¹¹⁹ Chambers, 1:330.

¹²⁰ TNA, SP 94/20, fol. 115^{r-v}, “Gondomar to Lake.”

by this public show of diplomatic support and “praised it, except for the archbishop,” of course.¹²¹ Meanwhile, the ambassador negotiated on Carvajal’s behalf. Abbot’s fears of a growing pro-Spanish faction appear to be justified as Gondomar worked closely with Robert Carr to secure her release, penning a letter to James to be personally delivered by the royal favorite, who the ambassador had asked to “look favorably upon his request.”¹²² Only after Carr and Sir Thomas Lake pressed James in a personal audience did the king agree to release Carvajal—conditionally, at first, upon her immediate banishment; though with some grandstanding by Gondomar and the assistance of “some in the Council,” this was reduced to vague promises of eventual exile.¹²³

Carvajal left the prison with as much publicity as she had entered it, reinforcing the very challenge she had offered and further exposing to the public the covert networks of Catholic operation in London. The ambassador “and several of his colleagues and other Catholic gentlemen” received her at the door of the jail. She was then escorted back to the Barbican in an eight-carriage parade of ambassadorial coaches, which “passed through all the principal streets of London in state, and before the royal palace.”¹²⁴ The archpriest George Birkhead commented that she was “sett out of prison with great triumph to the admiration of the Londoners.”¹²⁵

While she doubtless desired a martyr’s end, it is insufficient to reduce Carvajal’s brazen behavior during her nine years in London to the frantic attempts of a woman searching for self-immolation. Rather, Carvajal was attempting to present a specific way for English Catholics to live under the rule of a Protestant state, wherein Catholics were to reject a series of compromises (which she viewed as not Catholic at all) and to embrace a sort of rigorist and public indifference to punishment. This not only worked to expose the contradictions of the state’s line on persecution, but also posed a significant challenge for the Jacobean regime to navigate during the period of short Anglo-Spanish, and general European, peace in the first two decades of the seventeenth century.

CARVAJAL AND SPANISH STATECRAFT

Carvajal’s coordinated messages to the London Catholic community and the Jacobean state were constructed with a third audience in mind—her attentive

¹²¹ Loomie, 2:22.

¹²² Loomie, 2:19.

¹²³ For varying interpretations of this diplomatic negotiation, see Gardiner, 2:221–23; Carter; Senning, 1970.

¹²⁴ Fullerton, 268.

¹²⁵ Questier, 1998, 248.

and powerful Spanish correspondents. The 1604 Treaty of London had brought the nineteen-year Anglo-Spanish War to an end and signaled the elaboration of Philip III's *Pax Hispanica*.¹²⁶ To Carvajal, the peacemongers in Spain shared the same weakness as the oath takers in England—they placed temporal interests above God's glory. She scoffed at those who would say "you have to think of the good of the state, and that the rest is imprudent fervor," asking, "if there is neither prudence nor fervor, what will become of the state?"¹²⁷ Echoing the political agitation by the "Spanish Elizabethans" of Philip II's reign (r. 1556–98), Carvajal viewed the fight against Protestantism as a pan-European crusade against heresy, one in which there could be no peace without total victory.¹²⁸

A vocal proponent of interventionist policy, Carvajal made the case for the reassertion of control over the northern United Provinces, which had gained de facto independence by the 1580s. The Spaniards kept up agitation, but by 1607 the royal coffers were empty and Philip III and his *valido*, the duke of Lerma, searched for ways to reduce spending—starting with proposals to end the Dutch conflict. Alongside the financial considerations, many in the king's *junta* believed that a truce would bring much-needed domestic stability. Hawkish ministers dissented, arguing that a truce would mean "recognition of political rights for a community of 'heretics,' thereby violating the essence of Spanish monarchy, which existed to defend the Catholic faith."¹²⁹ Carvajal agreed, writing in January 1607 to Magdalena de San Jerónimo, a nun at the Flemish court of the Infanta Isabella, that she had heard rumors of peace, "a word . . . intolerable to the ears of anyone who has an honourable heart, and more so to anyone zealous for the honour and glory of God." Carvajal asserted that "Catholicism itself would undoubtedly be at risk" and that "no treaty or concessions would be acceptable to Our Lord, unless it is under the present auspices, with a Spanish government and fortresses and the Catholic religion established." She believed the "best thing to do is once more to bare our teeth and not to fear them."¹³⁰

A month before the Treaty of Antwerp was signed in April 1609, officially initiating the Twelve Years' Truce, Carvajal emphasized that "the truce with

¹²⁶ See Allen. Pando Canteli, 2010, 128–30, discusses Carvajal's agitation against peace with Elizabethan England.

¹²⁷ Carvajal, 2:135. Redworth, 178–85, 197, describes Carvajal's "neo-conservative" approach to Spain's political problems," but reduces her to a tool to be courted and manipulated by Lerma's allies and/or his enemies.

¹²⁸ For the textual interventions of Spanish Elizabethans, see Domínguez.

¹²⁹ Ferros, 192–93.

¹³⁰ Carvajal, 1:221.

Holland is a worry for all those who love what is good for the Holy Church and for the salvation of souls.”¹³¹ The Low Countries continued to be a worry for Carvajal, particularly after the 1612 Bourbon-Habsburg matches raised the possibility of further devolving Spanish power in Flanders. She wrote to Calderón, Lerma’s secretary, that “it would never be in Spain’s interests to relinquish these countries, rather it would be exceedingly bad. . . . It would be like opening the mouth of hell so that most people would be swallowed up, as is already the case with England.” Ending this plea, she boldly beseeched Calderón to “make these representations on [her] humble behalf to the duke.”¹³² She wished “to see them [the Dutch rebels] humiliated beneath the feet of our lord the king,” for the honor of Spain, of course, but also because “pinning down the insolence and shamelessness of Holland would be a great deterrent to all other heretics and would cause feelings of fear and confusion to those from all regions.”¹³³

Carvajal connected her interventionist pitch for the Low Countries to the situation under James, encouraging a pan-European agitation against Protestant heresy wherever it was to be found. If “Holland [were] vanquished and utterly reduced to due obedience, English teeth would be chattering with fear, and one could do with her as one wished.”¹³⁴ Spain, she emphasized, could be fighting from a position of strength—as long as they did not fall into the trap of allowing measures of toleration to distract from the goal of total victory. Carvajal used her firsthand experience with England’s deceptive accommodations, like the oath of allegiance, to argue that “these people seek to be at peace with the whole world, and under the guise of being gentle and pious, make Catholic princes forget the intolerable distress which those who are Catholic suffer here in this country.”¹³⁵

Further, the Spaniards, and Catholics in general, must not agree to any dynastic match with the heretical English. During the dynastic campaigning of 1611–12, Carvajal explained to Calderón that there were Catholic “schismatics” on the English Privy Council who desired a Spanish match, “clinging to the slender hope that this will make their wretched king take more kindly toward the Catholics.” She found this a misguided project, as they “place their own perfect comfort before the most high and Catholic honour of our lord and king and the cause of the Holy Church.” While discussing English conciliar politics, the message directed at the Spanish *junta* was clear—dynastic peace projects would gain nothing but “a trifle” of toleration, making a

¹³¹ Carvajal, 2:62.

¹³² Carvajal, 2:270.

¹³³ Carvajal, 2:308.

¹³⁴ Carvajal, 2:321–22.

¹³⁵ Carvajal, 2:135.

“marriage of this kind . . . a great and undisguised evil.”¹³⁶ Here, Carvajal put the relics of executed priests to work to defend her position. In April 1611, she sent a bit of John Roberts’s “holy flesh” to Joseph Creswell (1556–1623), the vice-prefect of the English Jesuits in Spain, along with a note on her disdain for the possibility of a match with the House of Savoy.¹³⁷ Carvajal commented, “I do not understand how these treaties and friendships can be brought about by such Catholic princes amidst so much persecution of the poor Catholics.”¹³⁸ In October 1612, she wrote to Calderón that she would send him pieces of Newport and Scott, as well as relics to pass on to the Duke of Lerma with “earnest representations to the duke” against the Savoy match for Prince Henry, declaring that she “refused to believe that the integrity and purity of his majesty’s [Philip III’s] faith would allow him to get caught up in anything so vile and repugnant to the Holy Church’s honor.”¹³⁹ Carvajal used the relics she had recovered as grisly, physical proof of persecution in England, connecting her judgments on Habsburg marriage policy with the Stuart domestic policy toward Catholics. She offered flesh as a reminder of exactly what sort of dynasty the Continental Catholic monarchies were considering getting into bed with.

Allowing England to enter into strong Protestant matches was equally undesirable. After the execution of John Almond in December 1612, which some saw as part of a gruesome prelude to the betrothal of the elector Palatine and Princess Elizabeth, Carvajal wrote to Calderón, “despite everything there is still time to prevent the marriage.” And moreover, it must be prevented, as “all there is left here is a half-consumptive child and the sister [who] is no better than the old Queen Elizabeth,” meaning that the “Palatine, a bad chip off the old Calvinist block, is as close as he can be to becoming the king of England.” Combined with “his own inheritance and his electoral dignity,” this would be “very bad business.” With Almond’s recovered body offered as proof, she asked, if the persecution of Catholics could not “be resolved with a prince who right now is so weak how is it to be sorted out with one who is much stronger?” Carvajal asserted, then, “our lord the king, the pope, and the emperor must think long and hard about this.”¹⁴⁰

Instead, to truly relieve the persecution in England, so pointedly described by Carvajal to her correspondents, Catholic princes would have to take direct

¹³⁶ Carvajal, 2:214.

¹³⁷ Carvajal, 2:145.

¹³⁸ Carvajal, 2:143.

¹³⁹ Carvajal, 2:252–53; Redworth, 197. For Carvajal’s relic-centric epistolary production, see Pando Canteli, 2016; for an analysis of Carvajal’s shame-based rhetorical appeals, see Levy-Navarro.

¹⁴⁰ Carvajal, 2:295.

action. Her own brazen acts of defiance, revealing the possibilities of resistance and the weakness of the Jacobean regime, can be seen as coordinated with her pitch that Spanish intervention would have a real chance at success. She argued that if “the Christian princes, or at least our king and the king of France, choose to bare their teeth to the king here and his nation, they will make them tremble, because they are more poverty-stricken and defenceless with every passing day.”¹⁴¹ She used the growing Irish challenge to demonstrate the vulnerability of the English and to expose a familiar avenue for Spanish involvement. The Irish parliamentary election had raised a (disputed) Protestant majority, and at the first sitting in May 1613, Catholic MPs disrupted the proceeding and attempted to supplant the government-appointed Speaker with a Catholic candidate—a riotous altercation ensued, the ringleaders were arrested, and some were presented with, and refused, the oath.¹⁴²

On September 5 (NS), Carvajal reported that James wanted to send 2,500 men to Ireland to quell the unrest, but lacked the funds to do so. She wrote Calderón and asked him to bring the situation “immediately to the duke’s attention,” commenting that “just a smidgen of help would do great things given the state they find themselves in . . . with three or four thousand troops going in once more they could work wonders, and, even without them, if only they were to have money,” they could pay for munitions and soldiers.¹⁴³ This would benefit the Catholics in Ireland, but backing them would also “be a shrewd act of state because they possess the spirit and the dash to rattle this king and make him tremble.”¹⁴⁴ Like the Irish, now inching toward rebellion, the English Catholics would be primed to support an international intervention, as, according to Carvajal, the only thing that kept them from rising “up repeatedly in revolt” was their “amazing patience.”¹⁴⁵

Not only did Carvajal use her position as an insider to convince her Continental audience that England was open to attack—she also argued that Spain was now better equipped than it had been during the ill-fated attempts of the Elizabethan period. Carvajal explained to Calderón in May 1613 that she was “very confident that God will give greater success to our lord the king than he gave his father, who, although good at the beginning when he was young and a few other times, was not really as good and virtuous as his son is and has been.” She used Philip II’s foreign policy failures to point to the danger of

¹⁴¹ Carvajal, 2:215.

¹⁴² For Ireland, see Questier, 2019, 346–50.

¹⁴³ Carvajal, 2:321. For a similar suggestion by Zúñiga: Senning, 2019, 31; TNA, SP 94/19, fols. 105^r–106^r, “Pedro de Zuniga to Philip III.”

¹⁴⁴ Carvajal, 2:331.

¹⁴⁵ Carvajal, 2:316.

displeasing God through rapprochement with heretical powers—after all, when Philip “looked kindly on Queen Elizabeth and did not oppose her taking control of the kingdom of England,” this led “to the total perdition which one sees in this kingdom,” therefore, no one should “be surprised that one armada after another was lost.”¹⁴⁶ Here, echoing the Catholic exiles of the 1580s and 1590s, who had criticized the late king’s handling of spiritual affairs, Carvajal endeavored to show Philip III the avenue to success where his father had failed.¹⁴⁷ She wrote to Calderón that she understood, at the time, that “the reason of state was very great and was very pressing indeed, but, despite this, God’s righteousness, justice and glory . . . has to crush and triumph over whatever stands in its way,” prudent statecraft here included.¹⁴⁸ If Philip III and Lerma set aside their misguided peace project and did what God’s honor demanded, God would grant them victory.

Carvajal’s bold demand for a Catholic crusade against the heretical Jacobean regime was part of a highly coordinated pitch to the very center of the Spanish *junta*. How much, if at all, Calderón relied upon his cousin-in-law’s reports of persecution and resistance is unknown, but that Carvajal was in communication with the secretary of the most powerful man in Spain can be seen as shaping her behavior in England—she was clearly calibrating her actions to a number of audiences. Carvajal’s opinions on foreign policy help situate her messages to the London Catholic community and the Jacobean regime inside a thoroughly European context—in which a broad strand of Counter-Reformation Catholic thought dictated that nothing should be conceded by the persecuted who were suffering under a heretical regime, and that heretical regimes could not be suffered to stand in the international community.

ANGLO-SPANISH RELATIONS AND THE CAUSE FOR CARVAJAL’S SANCTITY

By way of conclusion, I will briefly return to the mirrored positions of Carvajal and Archbishop Abbot as a way to triangulate the intra- and interconfessional, and intra- and international, tensions over the impact and future of Anglo-Spanish peace. In their respective national settings, they represent corresponding positions on the tied political and spiritual dangers of the peace—they both criticize compromises offered to English Catholics by the Protestant state, and compromises offered to the English state by foreign Catholic powers. In relation to one another, Carvajal and Abbot can be seen in an antagonistic, but

¹⁴⁶ Carvajal, 2:309.

¹⁴⁷ For Elizabethan Catholic exiles, see Domínguez.

¹⁴⁸ Carvajal, 2:309.

symbiotic, embrace. The more egregious the agitation by the likes of Carvajal, the better Abbot could leverage the sustained threat of Catholicism against a rising Hispanophile faction at the English court and council. The greater the degree of persecution led by the likes of Abbot, the better Carvajal could promote interventionist action against the Jacobean regime to a splintering Spanish court. Caught between these reciprocal and conflicting agendas was the London Catholic community, split internally along familiar lines—divisions inherited from the mid- and late Elizabethan period and laid bare by the polarized reaction to Carvajal from within the community.

To many, the strand of Catholic thought that Carvajal embodied did not seem particularly viable at the time of her mission. She asked London Catholics to reject shows of outward religious conformity and loyalist obedience at a moment of Protestant dynastic security unwitnessed in England for the previous fifty years. She advocated for Habsburg intervention during a decade of recovery and disengagement from European conflicts after extended wars of religion wrought havoc on Spanish finances and domestic stability. When Carvajal died of a bronchial infection on 2 January 1614 (NS), still on English soil awaiting exile, her vision of the future of English Catholicism appeared increasingly untenable.¹⁴⁹

Compromise and bids for tolerance seemed to be the way forward as discussion for a match between Prince Charles (1600–49) and the Infanta Maria (1606–46) began in earnest the year after Carvajal's death, gaining limited protections for Catholics who would become a bargaining chip in the marriage negotiations.¹⁵⁰ In London, Abbot's anti-Spanish stance earned increasing disfavor; when a formal match commission was set up in 1617 he was conspicuously excluded, and his support of the Bohemian revolt the following year permanently damaged his position at court.¹⁵¹ In Madrid, ministerial divisions over Spain's role in Europe continued to deepen, particularly after the death of Philip III in March 1621. Calderón, already clouded in scandal by 1612, met a disastrous end as the Anglo-Spanish negotiations entered their most serious period in the early 1620s.¹⁵² Under a new king and a new favorite, Calderón

¹⁴⁹ Rhodes, 2000, 29. Carvajal died, according to New Style dating, on her forty-eighth birthday.

¹⁵⁰ See Cogswell, 1989b.

¹⁵¹ Fincham, 48, 52.

¹⁵² Libels accused Calderón of murdering Queen Margaret (1584–1611), who died after childbirth in October 1611. He remained protected by Lerma, but both were left exposed when Lerma fell from power in the 1618 Revolution of the Keys. See Ferros, 226–67, 246, 256–58.

was executed in October 1621. His throat was slit and he was left to publicly bleed to death on the scaffolds in the Plaza Mayor.¹⁵³

If her particular Catholic worldview was rejected during her lifetime, the legacy of Carvajal's unique positioning between traditions of English Catholic activism and Spanish Counter-Reformation spirituality was co-opted into a postmortem pitch for a renewed crusade against the heretical English regime. Upon the failure of the Spanish Match in 1623, England's foreign policy underwent a "blessed revolution," as the court and parliament reorganized around opposition to Spain.¹⁵⁴ Spain, having already renewed hostilities in the Low Countries, prepared to reenter a war with England in 1625. That same year, the prioress of the Real Monasterio de la Encarnación, where Carvajal's body remained uninterred, advanced the cause of her beatification.¹⁵⁵ A decade after her death, Carvajal's vows, poetry, and letters were collected and mobilized as a reservoir of the ideologies motivating and legitimating the conflict that was to engulf Europe in the late 1620s—her candidature for sanctity, here, a function of international political circumstances, conditioned by the belated success of her rigorist Counter-Reformation agenda.

¹⁵³ Boyden.

¹⁵⁴ See Cogswell, 1989a.

¹⁵⁵ Rhodes, 2000, 299.

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