

*The Life and Writings of  
Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza*



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## *Contents*

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Illustrations	xi
Acknowledgments	xiii
Introduction	
The Other Voice	1
Luisa de Carvajal's Life Writings	6
The World of the Spanish Nobility	13
Early Childhood Reminiscences	17
Adolescence and Penitential Discipline	25
Spiritual Poetry	36
The Sacred and the Profane in Carvajal's Spiritual Poetry	41
Correspondence	48
Desire for Martyrdom in England	54
Missionary Life in London	66
A Roman Priest in Women's Clothing	71
The Traffic in Relics	78
Circulating Her Life Story	91
Luisa de Carvajal's Afterlife	98
Autobiography	111
Selected Spiritual Poems	153
Selected Correspondence	201
Bibliography	351
Index	365

## Introduction

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### *The Other Voice*

From the number of biographies written about her peripatetic life, the noblewoman, author, and religious activist Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza (1566–1614) emerges as one of the most controversial female figures of early modern Spain. Rejecting the traditional paths for women of marriage or the convent, Carvajal left Madrid for London at thirty-nine years of age as a self-appointed missionary to England with the intention of converting the Anglicans to Catholicism. That she could take such an unprecedented voyage was undoubtedly due to her connections as a member of the powerful Mendoza family, as well as to the donation of her inheritance to the Jesuit order, which had long supported the English Catholics' resistance to Protestant rule.<sup>1</sup> Yet after her arrival in London only six months before the Gunpowder Plot,<sup>2</sup> she was persecuted and twice incarcerated for what were considered insurrectional acts, and both the Spanish and English governments demanded her departure. After her second stay in prison, however, Carvajal became ill and died in London on her birthday, January 2, 1614 at 48 years of age.

As tumultuous as her adult life was in England, Carvajal's childhood in Spain proved equally, albeit more personally, trau-

1. Many Jesuits championed the "English enterprise," the restitution of Catholicism in England, and advocated for a Catholic claimant to the English throne. Among the strongest proponents was Robert Persons, prefect of the English Mission and founder of the English College of Saint Alban at Valladolid in 1589, which Carvajal visited often when the court moved there in 1601. For Persons' involvement with the enterprise, see *Calendar of Letters and State Papers relating to English Affairs, vol. IV Elizabeth, 1587–1603*. Ed. Martin Hume (London: H.M.S.O., 1899), 628ff. See also Michael E. Williams, "Years of Promise and Fulfillment, 1589–1613" in *St Alban's College, Valladolid: Four Centuries of English Catholic Presence in Spain* (London: St Martin's Press, 1986), 14–33.

2. The failed attempt to blow up Parliament on November 5, 1605 by a small group of English Catholic dissidents; the most infamous, Guy Fawkes, visited Spain in 1603. Several Jesuits accused of having been implicated in the plot were visited by Carvajal in jail. See Alice Hogge, *God's Secret Agents; Elizabeth's Forbidden Priests and the Hatching of the Gunpowder Plot* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005).

## 2 Introduction

matic. Orphaned as a child, she experienced a disrupted family life that included four idyllic years with Philip II's daughters at court before being placed in the care of her uncle, Francisco Hurtado de Mendoza, the Marquis of Almazán and Count of Monteagudo, who moved the family to several towns and, finally, to Madrid.<sup>3</sup> A zealous Catholic who was recalled from his post as ambassador to the Vienna court in 1576, the marquis took over his young niece's spiritual education, ordering her to undergo harsh corporal discipline and spending long hours reading theological treatises to her from his vast library.<sup>4</sup> Contrary to his wishes, Carvajal refused to marry and declined to enter a convent; instead, immediately after the marquis's death, she moved into a small house in a poor neighborhood in Madrid where she lived an ascetic life, sweeping the streets in ragged clothing, joining in soup lines, succoring the poor, and caring for prostitutes. Although Carvajal's noble relatives and friends were shocked by her behavior, others, impressed by her piety, sought her counsel and prayers. Free from the enclosure of a convent, she not only kept apprised of the daily occurrences at court, but once in England, in her letters, she continued to comment frequently on the political conflicts across Europe. Given her travels, the time Carvajal devoted to writing is remarkable: her extant correspondence numbers over two hundred letters to relatives and political allies in Spain and the Netherlands. She also composed a small but impressive col-

3. Carvajal's maternal uncle was the Spanish ambassador to the Habsburg Viennese court when Carvajal was sent to live with his family at age ten; upon his return, he moved the family to the northeastern towns of Monteagudo and Almazán, and to Pamplona where he served as Viceroy of Navarra. The marquis returned to Almazán in 1579, then moved to Madrid in 1588 or 1590. His role as ambassador is detailed by Magdalena S. Sánchez, "Los vínculos de sangre: la emperatriz María, Felipe II, y las relaciones entre España y Europa Central," in *Congreso Internacional Felipe II (1598-1998), Europa dividida, la monarquía católica de Felipe II (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, 20-23 abril 1998)*, vol. 1.2 (Madrid: Parteluz, 1998), 777-793.

4. Fernando Bouza, "Docto y devoto: La biblioteca del Marqués de Almazán y Conde de Monteagudo (Madrid, 1591)," in *Hispania — Austria II. Die Epoche Philipps II. (1556-1598)*, ed. Friedrich Edelmayer (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik; Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1999), 247-308. See also Anne J. Cruz, "Reading Over Men's Shoulders: Noblewomen's Literary Practices in Early Modern Spain." In *Women's Literacy in Early Modern Spain and the New World*, ed. Anne J. Cruz and Rosilie Hernández (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 41-58.

lection of spiritual poetry, and penned numerous autobiographical writings. Indeed, thanks to her capacious writing throughout her life, we know more about the history of this remarkable woman than of most early modern Spanish women writers.

The various genres—autobiographical, poetic, and epistolary—through which Luisa de Carvajal expressed her private thoughts, political notions, and spiritual sentiments do not merely reflect different aspects of her personality, but assume contradictory and even opposing stances. These writings project a multifaceted voice that variously narrates her interior feelings, at times in conflict and other times in conformity with her social experiences. Not surprisingly, readers throughout the centuries have formed diverse opinions of the poet and missionary. Carvajal's life early on became the subject of several biographers: her confessor and spiritual advisor, the Jesuit Michael Walpole,<sup>5</sup> wrote her life story in both Spanish and Latin shortly after her death. Soon afterward, another biography by the licentiate Luis Muñoz, who knew her family and had met Carvajal as a child, appeared in 1632; a biography written by a Catholic Englishwoman was published in London in 1873.<sup>6</sup> These histories focused primarily on her spiritual journey and her travails in England as Carvajal recounted them in her autobiographical writings and letters. Judging her on the literary merits of her poetry, in 1903, the Spanish historian Manuel Serrano y Sanz lauded Carvajal as “undoubtedly, the most illustrious religious female poet of those who

5. Walpole belonged to a Catholic Norfolk family that produced several Jesuits: his brother Henry Walpole was martyred in 1595. See Augustus Jessopp, *One Generation of a Norfolk House: A Contribution to Elizabethan History* (London: Burns and Oates, 1879), 298–300. A prolific writer, Walpole was the probable translator of Saint Teresa's *Lyfe* (1611). See Kathleen T. Spinnenweber, “The 1611 Translation of St. Teresa's Autobiography: A Possible Carmelite-Jesuit Collaboration.” [http://www.pulib.sk/skase/Volumes/JTI02/pdf\\_doc/1.pdf](http://www.pulib.sk/skase/Volumes/JTI02/pdf_doc/1.pdf); [accessed 30 July 2011].

6. Walpole's manuscript Spanish and Latin biographies are archived in the Convento de la Encarnación, Madrid, and the English College of Saint Alban, Valladolid, respectively. Luis Muñoz's *Vida y virtudes de la venerable virgen doña Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza* (Madrid: Casa Real, 1632) addressed to Philip IV requesting that he support Carvajal's beatification, was reprinted in 1897; Lady Georgiana Fullerton's *The Life of Luisa de Carvajal* (London: Burns and Oates, 1873) is based on Muñoz.

#### 4 Introduction

flourished in seventeenth-century Spain.”<sup>7</sup> In 1930, one of Spain’s first feminist intellectuals, the socialist Margarita Nelken, comparing her favorably with Saint Teresa of Ávila, concluded that “in religious poetry, and in her century, no one surpassed [Carvajal] in the Castilian language.”<sup>8</sup> In 1933, the renowned philologists Antonio Rodríguez Moñino and María Brey Mariño published a collection of her poems “so that the reader may judge for him or herself the literary talents of this poet and martyr.”<sup>9</sup>

Since the latter half of the twentieth century, a growing number of readers have done just that. Scholarly awareness of the noblewoman has increased in tandem with the developing interest in women’s and gender studies, along with Counter-Reformation religious studies. From 1965 to 2012, no fewer than eight books and a doctoral dissertation, as well as various book chapters and journal articles, have been published on her life and writings.<sup>10</sup> Given its conflicting gender

7. “Indudablemente, la más ilustre poetisa religiosa de cuantas florecieron en España durante el siglo XVII.” Manuel Serrano y Sanz, *Apuntes para una biblioteca de escritoras españolas*, vol. I, (Madrid: Casa Real, 1903), 235. Unless otherwise stated, all translations are my own.

8. “En poesía religiosa, y en su siglo, nadie la sobrepasa en castellano.” Margarita Nelken, *Las escritoras españolas* (Barcelona: Labor, 1930), 75. Although Nelken advocated for improved social conditions for Spanish women, ironically, she opposed their right to vote, fearing they were not yet sufficiently educated and would first consult with their confessors. See Paul Preston, *Doves of War: Four Women of Spain* (London: HarperCollins, 2002).

9. “[P]ara que el lector pueda formar por sí juicio de las dotes literarias de esta mujer que fue poetisa y mártir” (8). Antonio R. Rodríguez Moñino and María Brey Mariño, “Luisa de Carvajal (poetisa y mártir); Apuntes biobibliográficos, seguidos de tres cartas inéditas de la Venerable Madre,” *Revista de la Bibliotecas, Archivos y Museos* (1933): 5–26. My thanks to Georgina Sabat-Rivers for this precious gift.

10. The eight biographies, some of which reproduce or translate selections from Carvajal’s poetry, autobiographical writings, and letters, include Jesús González Marañón and Camilo María Abad, S.J., *Doña Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza, epistolario y poesías*, vol. 179 (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1965); Camilo María Abad, S.J., *Una misionera española en la Inglaterra del siglo XVII* (Santander: Universidad Pontificia Comillas, 1966); Camilo María Abad, S.J., ed., *Escritos autobiográficos* (Barcelona: Juan Flors, 1966); Elizabeth Rhodes, *This Tight Embrace: Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza (1566–1614)* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press, 2000); María Nieves Pinillos Iglesias, *Hilando Oro: Vida de Luisa de Carvajal* (Madrid: Laberinto, 2001); Margaret A. Rees, *The Writings of Doña Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza, Catholic Missionary to James I’s London* (Lewiston, ME: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002); María Luisa García-Verdugo, *Luisa de Carvajal en su contexto* (Madrid: Pliegos, 2008); and Glyn Redworth, *The She-Apostle: The Extraordinary Life and Death of Luisa de Carvajal* (Oxford:

messages, Carvajal's life story does not lead any of her biographers to assume that she was a proto-feminist along the lines of a María de Zayas or a Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz.<sup>11</sup> Rather, to a greater or lesser extent, some attribute her extraordinary decision not to marry or profess but instead to proselytize in Anglican London, to her intense childhood deprivation and suffering at the hands of her uncle; others, to her impassioned "desire for martyrdom;" while still others see her as a mystic, following in the tradition of medieval saints and of Spain's own Teresa of Ávila. This study argues that such scholarly approaches contribute only partially to our knowledge of Luisa de Carvajal, and that more research is needed in order to understand both her subject position as a woman and the conflictive roles she played out in early modern Spain and England.

Certainly, no woman experienced the turmoil of the wars of religion between these two enemy nation-states as did Luisa de Carvajal. We are fortunate that she left a lengthy paper trail that both enriches and complicates her life history.<sup>12</sup> Unlike the letters she writes from England that record the agitation of her missionary work, Carvajal's spiritual poems and mystical fragments surface from an emotional wellspring, expressing her interiority. Although her poetry was composed while she was still in Spain, her correspondence to her relatives and friends, along with letters from her religious contacts and the dispatches of the Spanish ambassadors, streamed back and forth between England and the continent. These documents, which discuss the frus-

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Oxford University Press, 2008). The articles and chapters are too numerous to cite here; I refer to several individually in this study. Christopher James Henstock's outstanding dissertation, "Luisa de Carvajal: Text, Context, and (Self-)Identity" (2012) is filed with the Department of History, Manchester University. I thank him for making a copy available to me. Carvajal's letters are transcribed in Cervantes Virtual, <http://www.biblioteca-antologica.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/09/CARVAJAL-Y-MENDOZA-Epistolario.pdf>.

11. For an insightful feminist analysis of Zayas, see Lisa Vollendorf, *Reclaiming the Body: María de Zayas's Early Modern Feminism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

12. Carvajal's autobiographical writings do not follow a neat linear history, since they are comprised of several manuscripts written at different times. As I explain in my translation of her "Autobiography" in this volume, Camilo María Abad's *Escritos autobiográficos* collates the manuscripts into an acceptably fluid narration, which I have compared with the originals. I am indebted to Nieves Baranda Leturio for facilitating the copies.

## 6 Introduction

trations she encountered in her apostolate role in England and relate the high-level political dealings among the two governments, weave a web of historical intrigue that remains enthrallingly entangled to this day.<sup>13</sup>

Thanks to her abundant writings and to the increased interest in women's lives by social and literary historians, we are able to contextualize Carvajal's life more fully, engaged as it was in the private and public spheres of early modern Europe. The understanding we may glean from these sources allows us to compare her experiences as they are analyzed from different historical and ideological viewpoints. Surprisingly, however, despite the recent scholarly attention paid her, she remains little known outside Hispanist circles. My contribution to "The Other Voice" series—my introduction to her work and my translations of selections from her autobiography, correspondence, and poetry—intends to complement and enter into dialogue with earlier studies of Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza's singular life and writings. It is my hope that this volume will call this remarkable woman to the attention of the broader academic community and the general public, and that it will encourage other readers to judge for themselves her superb literary talents and her fascinating history.

### *Luisa de Carvajal's Life Writings*

The contradictory opinions held about Luisa de Carvajal reveal just how much women's lives—those written no less than those lived—present a conundrum to her readers. Autobiographies by definition require the selective composition and assessment of one's life experiences, since most are written years after the events take place, but they are also intended to address a particular readership. In the early modern period, women's writings simultaneously echoed and challenged the complexities of their culture's misogyny and exclusivity. Studies of English women authors, for instance, note that society expected

13. The correspondence of Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, Count of Gondomar, Spanish ambassador from 1612, may be accessed at the Biblioteca Real de Palacio, Madrid. The 1526 *Interrogatorio* or ordinary process of Carvajal's beatification, initiated by and archived in the convent of the Encarnación (ARMEN), offers yet another vision, one adjusted to the particular requirements of the process.



women to be quiet, chaste, and submissive; the concept of the “self” held negative connotations, since it had to be repressed in order to receive divine grace.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, literacy levels were low across Europe, so writing about one’s self was necessarily limited to those who had successfully garnered an education beyond reading. Only eleven percent of English women were literate, and in London, between 1580 and 1640, fully ninety percent of women could not sign their names.<sup>15</sup> That women were encouraged to read (or be read to) rather than write is evinced by the fact that over 85% of the 163 books published during those same years were addressed to women or intended to regulate their behavior.<sup>16</sup> Spanish women’s literacy was higher than that of English women; during the same period, literacy rates in Castile, Spain’s largest kingdom, compared favorably for men (over 50%) and women (one-fourth of women in Madrid could sign their names).<sup>17</sup>

Although there were significant differences in literacy across the various European countries (and within each country), there remained substantial similarities among women’s writings throughout early modern Europe, especially in the formulation of what have been called “ego-documents,” which include memoirs, diaries, travel accounts, family chronicles, and Inquisitional confessions, along with

14. Sheila Ottway, “Autobiography,” in *A Companion to Early Modern Women’s Writing*, ed. Anita Pacheco (Oxford; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 233. For other studies of early modern English women’s writings, see Sharon Cadman Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender: Reading Women’s Lives, 1600–1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); and Elspeth Graham et al., eds., *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen* (London; New York: Routledge, 1989).

15. Patricia Demers, *Women’s Writing in English: Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 23.

16. Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer, “Introduction: Rereading Women’s Literary History,” in Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer, eds. *Reading Early Modern Women: An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print, 1550–1700* (New York: Routledge), 6. See also Suzanne W. Hull, *Chaste, Silent & Obedient: English Books for Women, 1475–1640* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1984).

17. According to Sara T. Nalle, these high rates do not hold true in provinces such as Cuenca. I thank Professor Nalle for allowing me to cite from her unpublished manuscript, “The Unknown Reader: Women and Literacy in Golden Age Spain.”

## 8 Introduction

conventional autobiographies.<sup>18</sup> Because similarities also extend throughout the different historical periods, Domna C. Stanton, when discussing “autogynographies”—a term she coins for women’s writings across time and space—assuredly quotes Saint Teresa of Ávila’s complaint that she was “subjected to severe restrictions” in her writing.<sup>19</sup> According to Stanton, in women’s writings especially, “intrasubjectively, the self-censoring speaker invariably display[s] impulses toward both exposure and concealment” (12). In the early modern period, the move to simultaneously reveal and conceal aspects of her life was a crucial one, given that no woman was at liberty to express herself completely due to the many external and internal cultural pressures she experienced. As Stanton states, “the autogynographical narrative was marked by conflicts between the private and the public, the personal and the professional” (13). Clearly, the convergence in Spanish women’s writings of categories such as gender, social class, ethnicity, and religion demands our close attention, since the tensions among these categories elide any uniform interpretation of women’s lives and the formation of their subjectivity.<sup>20</sup>

18. See Rudolf Dekker, ed. *Egodocuments and History. Autobiographical Writing in its Social Context since the Middle Ages* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2002). Although they do not address gender, James Amelang and Antonio Castillo Gómez make a strong case for these documents’ abundance in Spain, as they include “bureaucratic autobiographies” such as soldiers’ *memorias de servicio* and Inquisitional *trazas*; spiritual autobiographies; fictional autobiographies such as picaresque novels; relations; and letters; see their article “First Person Writings in European Context,” [http://www.firstpersonwritings.eu/spain/spain\\_project.htm#\\_edn1](http://www.firstpersonwritings.eu/spain/spain_project.htm#_edn1) [accessed July 30, 2010]. See also James Amelang, “Spanish Autobiography in the Early Modern Era,” in Winfried Schulze, ed., *Ego-Dokumente: Annäherung an den Menschen in der Geschichte? Vorüberlegungen für die Tagung, Ego-Dokumente* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996), 59–71; and Antonio Castillo Gómez and Verónica Sierra Blas, eds., *El legado de Mnemosyne: Las escrituras del yo a través del tiempo* (Gijón: Trea, 2007).

19. “I wish I had also been allowed to describe clearly and in full detail my grave sins and wicked life [but] I have been subjected to severe restrictions [by my confessors] in the matter.” Cited and translated by Domna C. Stanton, ed. *The Female Autograph* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 12.

20. I agree with George Mariscal that in early modern Spain “subjectivity was constituted through a wide range of complex networks rather than through any single practice.” I would, however, add gender, social behavior, and religious affiliation to his “blood, status, and kinship relations” as sites of class status and conflict. George Mariscal, *Contradictory Subjects:*

Luisa de Carvajal's literary production forms part of the various religious discourses that circulated in early modern Spain, as personal beliefs and confessional systems played determining roles in women's experiences across early modern Europe. Spiritual autobiographies, which had initially materialized within the medieval Church, flourished during the Catholic reformation under Isabel of Castile and Fernando of Aragón and again after the Counter-Reformation.<sup>21</sup> At those times, clergy reform and Inquisitional fear of heresy compelled the regulation of devotional practices, thereby encouraging and even obliging the spiritual writings of many religious, who were under pressure to prove their orthodoxy.<sup>22</sup> The order given to nuns by their confessors to write their life experiences is a key factor in conventual autobiography; behind this mandate was usually the spiritual advisor's intent to investigate mystical visions in order to ensure the nun's holiness and therefore protect her from the scrutiny of the Inquisition. Many of these texts also stemmed from the need by confessors to protect themselves as well as their spiritual charges from accusations of heresy or demonic possession. Yet, as Jodi Bilinkoff explains,

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*Quevedo, Cervantes, and Seventeenth-Century Spanish Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 76.

21. For examples of Spanish religious women's writings besides Saint Teresa of Ávila, see Ronald Surtz, *Writing Women in Late Medieval and Early Modern Spain: The Mothers of Saint Teresa of Avila* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995); Ronald Surtz, *The Guitar of God: Gender, Power, and Authority in the Visionary World of Mother Juana de la Cruz (1481–1534)* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990); and *Ana de San Bartolomé. Autobiography and Other Writings*, ed. and trans. Darcy Donahue, *The Other Voice in Early Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). For writings by French religious, see Marie-Florine Bruneau, *Women Mystics Confront the Modern World: Maria de l'Incarnation (1599–1672) and Madame Guyon (1648–1717)* (New York: SUNY Press, 1998).

22. For an excellent discussion of early monastic reform, see Elizabeth Leffeldt, "Habits of Reform: Religious Women before Trent," in her *Religious Women in Golden Age Spain: The Permeable Cloister* (Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 137–174. Saint Teresa's history with the Inquisition is well known; for its impact on other women visionaries, see Richard L. Kagan, *Lucrecia's Dreams: Politics and Prophecy in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990); Mary E. Giles, ed., *Women in the Inquisition: Spain and the New World* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); and Gillian T.W. Ahlgren, ed., *Francisca de los Apóstoles: The Inquisition of Francisca, a Sixteenth-Century Visionary on Trial* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

## 10 Introduction

confessors had other reasons for recording their charges' lives.<sup>23</sup> Not only did they encourage nuns and lay persons whom they believed spiritually gifted to compose their autobiographies, but they went so far as to record their lives themselves, "eager to publicize the pious lives and divinely endowed gifts of their spiritual daughters and offer them as models for emulation" (Bilinkoff, "How To," 35). Of course, as she notes, few confessors failed to stress their part in making these holy figures public, and some had personal reasons, such as repaying debts or lauding family members. The main goal for many, however, was to elevate their charges to the level of sainthood.<sup>24</sup>

Although spiritual autobiographies reflect the author's historical specificity and have varying formats, they are conditioned by such similar factors as the author's gender and purpose, as well as by their expected readership.<sup>25</sup> The profusion of spiritual biographies and autobiographies produced in Spain gave these texts a generic weight that began to assume predictable patterns: from Saint Augustine's *Confessions* and saints' lives such as the *Flos Sanctorum* to Saint Teresa of Ávila's *Libro de la vida* [*Book of Her Life*] as their sources, the life stories first recounted the protagonists' apparently sinful life, then their repentance, penitential acts, and, finally, conversion.<sup>26</sup> Saint Teresa's classic autobiography, known to Carvajal and translated into

23. See Jodi Bilinkoff, "How to be a Counter-Reformational Hagiographer," in Jodi Bilinkoff, *Related Lives: Confessors and their Female Penitents, 1450–1750* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 32–45.

24. Bilinkoff mentions the Jesuit Pedro de Ribadeneyra in particular, credited as the "creator of modern hagiography" (182) for the many lives he wrote: "The Many 'Lives' of Pedro de Ribadeneyra," *Renaissance Quarterly* 51.1 (Spring 1999): 180–196. His biography of Saint Ignatius was translated by Carvajal's confessor Michael Walpole. Her biographer Luis Muñoz may count as a lay hagiographer, having written the lives of numerous other religious, including those of Juan de Ávila, Luis de Granada, and Mariana de San José.

25. For a discussion of male versus female autobiography, see Darcy Donahue, "Teresa of Ávila and Ignatius of Loyola: A Gender-Based Approach to Spiritual Autobiography," in *Approaches to Teaching Teresa of Ávila and the Spanish Mystics*, ed. Alison P. Weber, (New York: Modern Language Association, 2009), 208–217.

26. See Alison P. Weber, "Religious literature in early modern Spain," in *The Cambridge History of Spanish Literature*, ed. David Gies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 149–58. She cites Melquíades Andrés Martín's number of 444 individual "hagiobiographies" alone, published between 1480 and 1700 in Spain (149).

English very probably by her confessor Michael Walpole, was printed in 1588 and circulated widely in Spain and England.<sup>27</sup> Despite the two women's markedly different social levels, the saint's *Vida* and Carvajal's autobiographical writings have numerous points in common, especially as regards their childhood narratives, since both begin by addressing their confessors, lamenting their mothers' early deaths and lauding their many virtues, and commenting on their own childhood attraction to saints. As in other spiritual autobiographies of religious women, both Teresa and Luisa narrate their physical ailments and their obsessive concerns over their spiritual faults. Yet another similarity, which carried through to their personalities, was the rhetorical fluctuation in their writings from abject humility to occasional bursts of authoritarianism, despite their efforts to establish a radical egalitarianism in their treatment of the uneducated women with whom they resided.

While these likenesses may well be attributed to a conscious desire on Carvajal's part to imitate the Teresian narrative, their lives also seem to dovetail on a number of important issues. As a young girl, Teresa rejected marriage, and even the convent: "[B]ut I still did not wish to become a nun, as it did not please God to give me this state, although I also feared marriage."<sup>28</sup> Both women became active missionaries, each in her own way: even though the saint never left Spain, she famously reformed the Carmelite order and founded seventeen convents across the country, from Soria to Granada. Similarly to Carvajal's wishes that her writings not be divulged because they were about matters of conscience, Teresa requested that at least part of her autobiography be kept secret, spurred by her fears of persecu-

27. In her pioneering study, *Teresa of Ávila and the Rhetoric of Femininity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), Weber notes perceptively that Teresa's "life" lacks an autobiographical motive in that she is not interested in having others consider her a unique individual, but in defending the authentic receptivity of divine favors (42–43). Nonetheless, although not planned for this purpose, its writing resulted in showcasing the nun's singularity and inspiring other religious women's texts.

28. "[M]as todavía deseaba no fuese monja, que éste no fuese Dios servido de dármele, aunque también temía el casarme" Santa Teresa de Jesús, *Libro de la vida*, ed. Dámaso Chicharro (Madrid: Cátedra, 1987), 129.

## 12 Introduction

tion by the Inquisition.<sup>29</sup> In the end, however, the difference in their social positions proved too great to overcome. The fact that both Carvajal and Teresa of Ávila were highly conscious of their hierarchy in a society that, under the terms of “honor” and “blood” valued family lineage above all, vastly outweighed their resemblances and was at the root of all other differences.<sup>30</sup> A *conversa* (descendant of Jews) whose grandfather, father, and uncle had been made to parade in Toledo wearing the Inquisition penitential garments called *sambenitos*, Teresa was at constant risk of scrutiny by the Inquisition.<sup>31</sup> By contrast, Carvajal was not only the grand-daughter of a powerful bishop and niece of a Spanish grandee and marquis, she was also the niece of Bernardo de Sandoval y Rojas, Cardinal of Toledo, who became Inquisitor General in 1608.<sup>32</sup> And, despite their gender, both women negotiated unparalleled life choices within the climate of the Counter-Reformation: Teresa opted for the *communitas* of the convent while Carvajal, whose devotion was equally as compelling if not as manifestly mystical as the Carmelite nun, sought instead a life of spiritual solitude amid the dangers of persecution in Protestant London.<sup>33</sup>

29. “From what I say from here on, I do not [give permission], if it is shown to anyone, I do not want it to be said to whom it was given, nor who wrote it” [Para lo que de aquí adelante dijere, no se la doy; ni quiero, si a alguien lo mostraren, digan quién es por quien pasó, ni quien lo escribió] (*Vida* 187–88).

30. Saint Teresa often had conflicting relations with noble women, especially Carvajal’s relative, Ana de Mendoza, Princess of Éboli. See Alison P. Weber, “Saint Teresa’s Problematic Patrons,” *Journal of Medieval and Early Modern Studies* 29.2 (Spring 1999): 357–79. See also Anne J. Cruz, “Las relaciones entre las mujeres religiosas y sus patrocinadoras: confluencias e influencias,” in *Escritoras entre rejas. Cultura conventual femenina en la España Moderna*, ed. Nieves Baranda Leturio and Ma. Carmen Marín Pina (Madrid: Iberoamericana Vervuert, forthcoming). Teresa’s concern with lineage has been attributed to her Jewish antecedent; see Teófanos Egido, “Ambiente histórico,” in *Introducción a la lectura de Santa Teresa*, ed. Alberto Barrientos et al. (Madrid: Espiritualidad, 2002), 63–155.

31. Jodi Bilinkoff, *The Avila of Saint Teresa: Religious Reform in a Sixteenth-Century City* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1989), 109.

32. Son of María Fajardo Chacón, Luisa’s great aunt, Sandoval y Rojas was the nephew of Francisco Gómez de Sandoval y Rojas, Duke of Lerma, Philip III’s influential favorite.

33. Dámaso Chicharro gives Teresa’s probable desire for a “spiritual lineage” as one reason for entering the convent (*Vida* 23). For an analysis of Carvajal’s mysticism, see Glyn

### *The World of the Spanish Nobility*

Carvajal's rejection of married life and the convent could not have been sustained without her assurance of receiving a substantial dowry as her inheritance. Although her father's will stipulated that the amount should be calculated on whether or not she became a nun, she reversed the testamentary logic to argue that by not professing in a religious order, she was entitled to the same inheritance as if she chose to marry. The difference was considerable: 2,000 ducats for her dowry if she entered a convent, 20,000 ducats if she did not. In order to claim her inheritance, she took her father's executors to court. Once she won, however, her brother, who stood to gain from her loss, opposed the verdict, so Carvajal sued him for her right to inherit.<sup>34</sup> The lengthy legal battle forced her to move to Valladolid when Philip III transferred the royal court to that city in 1601. Her residence next to the English College of Saint Alban permitted her to frequent the Jesuits and pray in their chapel to the *Virgen Vulnerata*, the image of the Virgin Mary desecrated by the English at the raid on Cádiz in 1596.<sup>35</sup> By happy coincidence, there she met the Jesuit Michael Walpole, who championed her cause and became her confessor while in England.

Most probably after her first imprisonment in London in 1608, Walpole asked Carvajal to write her life story.<sup>36</sup> Although we are not

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Redworth, "A New Way of Living? Luisa de Carvajal and the Limits of Mysticism," in *A New Companion to Hispanic Mysticism*, ed. Hilaire Kallendorf, (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 273–95.

34. Carvajal's brother's countersuit, which was resolved by her releasing 5,000 ducats to him, resulted in lowering her inheritance to 12,000 ducats. Borrowing 2,000 ducats to add to her inheritance of 12,000 ducats, Carvajal turned over the rent on this amount to the English College of Saint Alban in Valladolid (see her letter 31 to Padre Ricardo Valpolo [Richard Walpole]; González and Abad, *Epistolario y poesías*, 147). The Jesuit Order later founded a seminary in Louvain with the funds (see her letter 21, González and Abad, *Epistolario y poesías*, 139, n.3).

35. For the devotion to the *Virgen Vulnerata*, see Anne J. Cruz, "Vindicating the Vulnerata: Cádiz and the Circulation of Religious Imagery as Weapons of War," in *Material and Symbolic Circulation between Spain and England, 1550–1650*, ed. Anne J. Cruz (Aldershot, UK; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2008), 39–60.

36. As Henstock describes in his dissertation, Carvajal composed several versions; the clean copy goes only to age 11; the rest is a draft from age 11 to 20. Since the most polished and complete autobiographical narratives are those of her life before she left Spain, some critics

given his reasons, it is obvious that the Jesuit, who wrote two biographies of Luisa after her death, was not only anxious for Carvajal to assume the level of spirituality usually claimed by religious women, but to have her document her efforts in writing. If the Jesuit had a self-serving motive for mandating the autobiography, he more than made up for it by the care he devoted to her. Having helped to arrange Carvajal's voyage and accompanying her to England, he incurred the anger of the Spanish ambassador for his support of her mission. He was jailed with her in 1608, after which he left England; on his return, he was nearly jailed alongside her in 1613, and was present at her side when she died. He escorted her cadaver back to Spain, where he and Magdalena de San Jerónimo, Carvajal's early correspondent, served as witnesses to her body's arrival (Jassopp 270–71).

Walpole's relations with Carvajal further defied the conventional confessor-penitent model in that she expressly mandated her wishes, despite her humble tone: after a grave illness in 1611, when he was out of the country, she wrote a codicil to her 1604 will, in which she leaves her inheritance to the English Fathers of the Society of Jesus:

And I humbly request that Father Michael Walpole of the Society of Jesus bless me and that he truly help me with his sacrifices and prayers. He should be given all my papers, monies, and other items belonging to me or in my possession, so he may dispose of everything, as I have already discussed with his grace. And I beseech him to aid and comfort my good companions as much as possible.<sup>37</sup>

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assume that Carvajal wrote them while waiting to leave the country. It is far more likely that these early narratives were written in England but given more emphasis and care because Walpole was unfamiliar with that period of her life. She did not continue her autobiography while in London, and we know of her life after age 20 only through her letters.

37. "Y pido humildemente al Padre Miguel Valpolo de la Compañía de Jesús, que me eche su bendición, y ayude con sus sacrificios y oraciones muy de veras. Al cual se entregue todos los papeles, dineros y otras cosas que fueren mías, o estuvieren en mi poder, para que disponga de todo conforme a lo que tengo tratado con su merced. Y le suplico ampare y favorezca, cuanto sea posible, a mis buenas compañeras" (her will is transcribed in full as "letter" 128 in González and Abad, *Epistolario y poesías*, 327–28).



On Carvajal's death, the recently appointed ambassador to England, Diego Sarmiento de Acuña, future Count of Gondomar, wrote to King Philip III:

This priest [Walpole] was her confessor and attended to her, and he has agreed to look after everything, as he is an exemplary and very prudent person, and took charge of her keys and papers and everything this lady had. And he has also agreed to write a narrative of her life and death, which will no doubt be of great solace and edification.<sup>38</sup>

Given the public anger aroused by Carvajal, jailed twice for her insurrections, Walpole's association with the missionary placed him at grave risk, and he never returned to his native country. Her noble standing and innate intelligence invited the Jesuit's admiration and loyalty; although highly educated, he did not form part of the English aristocracy and would consider himself lower on the social scale. Even though she had met him earlier, it is not until 1603 that Carvajal mentions him in a letter asking Magdalena de San Jerónimo at Brussels to help bring his sister to Spain: "and here [in Valladolid] she has two brothers [Christopher and Michael Walpole], both priests in the Society, very well educated and with spirits like angels."<sup>39</sup>

Carvajal's strong resolve, exhibited since her youth and so admired by Walpole, was nonetheless considered by others and even by herself a source of sinful excess and aristocratic pride. Although she seemingly bowed to the will of her childhood governess and her uncle—and certainly did so when they demanded that she do penance—she internalized the control imposed by them, which in turn

38. "Este Padre era su confesor y la asistía, y se ha hallado a todo, que es persona muy ejemplar y prudente, y se encargó y puso cobro en las llaves y papeles y todo lo que esta señora tenía; y también se ha encargado de hacer una relación de su vida y muerte, que sin duda será de gran consuelo y edificación" (cited in Abad, *Una misionera*, 359). Walpole kept his promise to Carvajal in aiding her companions; in 1624, he wrote to Gondomar requesting the continuance of a pension for the Englishwoman Jane Mills (Jessopp 271).

39. Letter 14 to Magdalena de San Jerónimo (*Epistolario y poesías*, 128).

gave her the strength to attain her desire to travel outside Spain.<sup>40</sup> To be sure, any understanding of Carvajal's writings must rely not only on an appreciation of the author's deep religiosity and political beliefs, but of her feelings of entitlement as part of the aristocracy. In this regard, Carvajal's extraordinary life is undoubtedly problematic, since it cannot be taken as a typical example of religious women's lived experiences: her early pampered life, her connections with the court and with the Jesuits, and her decision to travel to England depended on her allegiance to her social class.<sup>41</sup> In this, as in her earlier experiences, she was as much a product of the power elite as were the male members of the Mendoza and Carvajal families. Spanish historian José Antonio Maravall has described the history of the Spanish aristocracy as one of "demilitarization."<sup>42</sup> By the early modern period, the military function of the nobility, which had previously constituted its major service to the monarchy, had almost ceased to exist, displacing the members to other areas of interest, whether bureaucratic, courtly, or patrimonial. The transformations undergone by the nobility may be seen at close range in the lives of Luisa de Carvajal's male relatives. Initially residing in their townships as befitted the medieval landed aristocracy, both her father and her maternal uncle left their distant residences to assume government posts they had garnered by means of their family connections and their political dealings at court. Although her father's untimely death cut short his burgeoning career, her uncle, who held the title of first marquis of Almazán and grandee of Spain, was appointed Spanish ambassador to the court of Habsburg emperor Maximilian II and, on his return to Spain, named viceroy of Navarra.

40. Anne J. Cruz, "Willing Desire: Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza and Female Subjectivity," in Helen Nader, ed., *Power and Gender in Renaissance Spain: Eight Women of the Mendoza Family, 1450–1650* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 177–93.

41. Even though the conventional term "caste" (*casta*) is often employed to demarcate social rank by religion and culture, and those of "estate" or "order" (*estamento*, *ordo*) to confer distinctions by social function, these prove too static to encompass the intricate social movements characteristic of the period. Class, as I employ the term, refers to the groups socially aggregated and institutionalized through birth, economic, and/or occupational status, whose identity is promoted by means of social behavior.

42. José Antonio Maravall, *Poder, honor y élites en el siglo XVII* (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno, 1984), 203.

The change from inherited positions to political appointments relied strongly on a notion of honor no longer based solely on class privilege, but, in opposition to the collective nobility, on individual merit and concern with personal recognition and reward (Maravall 21). By the late 1600s, the distinction of the Mendoza name did not depend exclusively on its protracted aristocratic lineage as a consolidated family, but also on the significant social and political roles earned by family members. That Luisa de Carvajal was as aware as were her male relatives of the ways in which social comportment influenced her aristocratic position and, conversely, how her class status affected her gendered behavior, demonstrates both the inherent inseparability of the two categories and their unstable relations. Carvajal would scandalize her relatives by utilizing her aristocratic power to refuse marriage, restore her inheritance, and arrange for her voyage to England. Once there, she depended on her connections for donations and for protection by the Spanish embassy, yet she acted in as humble a manner as possible. The disturbance she caused, by which she hoped to achieve her martyrdom, was due less to her aristocratic status than to her transgressive gender conduct. In England, she publicly agitated for the Catholic cause through her knowledge and preaching of theology; a behavior for a woman that was prohibited in Spain.

### *Early Childhood Reminiscences*

Luisa de Carvajal y Mendoza was born January 2, 1566 in the small Extremaduran town of Jaraicejo, Cáceres, of noble and wealthy lineage. Her mother María de Mendoza y Pacheco was a daughter of Juan Hurtado de Mendoza, the 7th Lord of Almazán and 3rd Count of Monteagudo, descendant of the second branch of the powerful Mendoza clan, one of the most distinguished families in Spain.<sup>43</sup> Luisa's father, Francisco de Carvajal, was the son of the formidable

43. María de Mendoza's dowry of three million maravedies included those of her sisters, who probably entered a convent (Guerrero Mayllo 78). For the Mendoza family, see Helen Nader, *The Mendoza Family in the Spanish Renaissance, 1350–1550* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1979), accessible online: <http://libro.uca.edu/mendoza/mendoza.htm> See also the chapters of individual Mendoza women in Helen Nader, ed., *Power and*

bishop of Plasencia, Gutierre de Vargas y Carvajal, a respected theologian who attended the Council of Trent and became an ardent devotee of the Jesuit order.<sup>44</sup> Immensely rich, the bishop was a descendant of the Vargas family, the owners of the fields near Madrid since at least the eleventh century, where the city's future patron saint, Isidoro the Laborer [San Isidro Labrador], toiled during his lifetime.<sup>45</sup> The bishop secured his son several government appointments; Francisco served as magistrate [regidor] in Madrid from 1560 to 1565 and as chief magistrate of León, prompting his wife and five children to move there from Jaraicejo.<sup>46</sup> Carvajal's political ascendancy was cut short by a virulent disease, likely typhus, that ended both his and his wife's life and left Luisa orphaned at six years of age.

When writing of her first years in Jaraicejo and León, Carvajal states to an interlocutor, no doubt her confessor Michael Walpole who had requested that she pen her autobiography: "It will be necessary to speak of childish things until my twelfth birthday, since your grace insists that I do not leave out anything that I may remember."<sup>47</sup>

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*Gender in Renaissance Spain: Eight Women of the Mendoza Family, 1450–1650* (Urbana-Campaign: University of Illinois Press, 2004).

44. Although in his synods Bishop Vargas preached the conventional creed against concubinage, he followed the worldly lifestyle of Pedro González de Mendoza, Cardinal of Toledo, known as the "Great Cardinal," who fathered three children. The bishop's importance is evinced in his burial site, not in Extremadura, but in Madrid, where he commissioned an elaborate Renaissance chapel built as a family mausoleum next to the church of San Andrés, still known as "the bishop's chapel" [la capilla del Obispo]. Antonio Matilla Tascón, *Iglesia y eclesiásticos en la documentación de Madrid* (Madrid: Fundación Matritense del Notariado, 1993), 287–88.

45. The diocese of Plasencia was the richest in Extremadura province; in 1630 its episcopal rents ascended to 60,000 ducats annually, making it the fourth richest diocese of the thirty-six episcopal churches in Castile, with rents of over 500,000 ducats. Ángel Rodríguez Sánchez, Miguel Rodríguez Cancho and Julio Fernández Nieva, *Historia de Extremadura. Los tiempos modernos*, vol. 3 (Badajoz: Biblioteca Básica Extremeña, 1985), 429–30.

46. Ana Guerrero Mayllo, *Familia y vida cotidiana de una élite de poder: los regidores madrileños en tiempos de Felipe II* (Madrid: Siglo Veintiuno, 1993), 29. See also Francisco Tomás y Valiente, "Las ventas de oficios de regidores y la formación de oligarquías urbanas en Castilla, siglos XVII y XVIII," *Historia, Instituciones, y Documentos* 2 (1975): 525–74.

47. "Necesario será, hasta los doce años, tratar de niñerías, pues tan de veras manda v[uestra] m[erced] que no deje nada de cuanto se me acuerda" (Abad, "Autobiografía," *Escritos autobiográficos*, 132).

Yet Carvajal's life history—which may be divided into two periods, her childhood and early adulthood in Spain, and her missionary activities in England—discloses that she wrote meticulously at all times, expressing her spiritual longings in her poetry, and narrating her daily experiences in her prose writings and through her correspondence. In obeisance to her confessor's request, she begins her autobiography by recollecting her earliest years with her parents: one of Carvajal's first remembrances is of her mother caring for her when she falls ill the first year in León with *cuartanas*, an intermittent fever: "she spent many nights by my bed fully dressed, crying as if I were dead. But instead she died the first day of January of that first year from a fierce typhoid fever that, I heard, she caught from a poor person whose burial she went to arrange, as she so often did, and from taking in the sick in her own room and having them lie on her velvet pillows by her chimney."<sup>48</sup>

The Jesuit biographer Camilo María Abad perceptively notes the severity that creeps into Carvajal's tone when mentioning her mother's death: Luisa was aware that her mother often circulated in public throughout León, to the detriment of her health, a practice that the narrator, assuming the child's perspective, retrospectively judges harshly, inverting the parent-child role:

Although my mother was an uncommon example of modesty and demureness, I would often say to the servants, "My mother is too lenient, for she allows so many visits! When I grow up, I will not let so many visit me." I judged it more as permissiveness than immodesty, but I still did not approve of it. I would carry on like this, they tell me, on other issues, pleasing all who heard me.<sup>49</sup>

The opposition that Carvajal sets up between her mother and her childhood self suggests an inchoate desire to compete with her, trying to outdo her mother's pious behavior yet also wishing to secure her maternal approval. It is evident that these thoughts could not have

48. Abad, *Missionary*, 10.

49. Abad, "Autobiografía," *Escritos autobiográficos*, 133.

been held by the young child. They are, instead, indicative of the tension brought about by her perception, as an adult, of the role that was expected of her as her mother's daughter. These conflictive emotions cast a shadow over her childhood recollections, manifesting her unresolved frustration over what she may well have imagined might have been maternal abandonment.

Indeed, Carvajal's loss of her mother at such an early age could not help but leave a deep sense of loneliness, which the grown woman's autobiography assuages by pretending to know the mother's most intimate feelings and by extolling her physical beauty and goodness. Yet Carvajal must rely on others to form a visual image of her mother and to describe her mother's charitable acts toward the poor. Following conventional hagiographies, she stresses her mother's piety and her own wish, even as a toddler, to imitate her devout acts of charity. By imitating her mother's charitable acts, the young child became cognizant of her own position within the social hierarchy. She loved nothing more, she admits, than to sit atop a high table, among her household pages and the poor, who humiliated themselves by calling her their queen and bowing low to her, while she showered them with fruits and nuts.<sup>50</sup> The language she uses to describe herself—a "queen" among her humble subjects—both assumes her displacement of her mother's domestic role and echoes a concern with class difference pervasive throughout her autobiography. Paradoxically, given the humiliation that she will impose later on herself, this apparently innocent desire for attention, which we may attribute to her privileged childhood, spoiled as she was by her parents and servants, transforms, as we see later in her narrative, into a self-perceived obstinate imperiousness that she will struggle to control.

After her parents' death, Carvajal spent four years at the *Infanta* Juana of Austria's palace at the Convent of the Descalzas Reales,<sup>51</sup> where her maternal great aunt held the post of governess [aya] to King Philip II's children. Luisa quickly adapted to court life; together

50. Abad, "Autobiografía," *Escritos autobiográficos*, 135.

51. The Monasterio de Nuestra Señora de la Visitación, also known as the Descalzas Reales or Discalced Royals, was founded by Philip II's sister in a separate but attached building next to the palace, where Juana had been born. The nuns, of the order of the Poor Clares, were mainly of aristocratic and royal origin and brought by Francisco de Borja from Denia.