

Catholic marriages and family politics: the Vaux children vs. Sir Thomas Tresham

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The recusant brothers-in-law William, third Baron Vaux of Harrowden (1535–95) and Sir Thomas Tresham (1543–1605), are best-known as exemplars of stalwart Catholicism and for their claims of fidelity to queen and country. They rose to prominence for their connection to the Jesuit proto-martyr Edmund Campion in 1581, and Vaux's daughters Anne and Eleanor are celebrated — or notorious — for their support of the Jesuit Henry Garnet and suspected complicity in the Gunpowder Plot. Tresham's sister Mary married Vaux, and the two men enjoyed a close friendship. Vaux leant heavily on Tresham for counsel, and the families have thus been absorbed into arguments for a closed Catholic community who drew closer together amid persecution. Yet these families were also divided, not by religio-political matters of great weight, but by more earthly causes of family unhappiness: youthful disobedience, scandalous marriage, and money. Through a close analysis of three linked episodes of family strife, this article looks beyond the singular fact of their confessional identity to argue that, like their Protestant counterparts, Catholics were not immune to acrimony. Disruptions to family unity could heap further tribulation on Catholics, and shared confessional identity might not be sufficient to repair bonds once severed.

Keywords: marriage, family politics, Court of Chancery, lawyers and litigation, Catholic elites

William, third Baron Vaux and his brother-in-law Sir Thomas Tresham enjoy a certain familiarity among historians of early modern English Catholicism.¹ Scholars frequently describe them as pillars of recusant faithfulness who suffered penalties, fraternised with

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¹ A note on transcription: in quotations from manuscripts, original spelling has been preserved, but the thorn has been rendered as 'th' and common abbreviations and contractions have been silently expanded, such as those for 'with', 'which', 'the', 'that', 'your', for titles, and for 'plaintiff' and 'defendant'. Other expansions are rendered in italics. Text italicised in the original is underlined here, and words split over two lines in the original have been reunited.

missionary priests, and proclaimed their unswerving loyalty to queen and country in a somewhat two-dimensional conception of the Catholic experience.² As meaningful exemplars for elite Catholics under Elizabeth I, both families and their kin have attracted scholarly attention in recent years, which has begun to replace the cliché with a complex balancing act of negotiation, division, and religio-political engagement.³ Susan Cogan and Laura Verner have traced the networks of kinship and patronage self-consciously constructed and maintained by Catholic families in the Midlands, revealing deliberate strategies for survival. Both have emphasised Catholics' commitment to kinship ties over religious politics, demonstrating alliances across confessional and geographical boundaries and the spectrum of Catholic conformity, and Cogan has paid particular attention to female agency within these networks.⁴ Both Sandeep Kaushik and I have examined Tresham's loyalism and resistance more thoroughly, raising doubts about the utility of the term 'resistance' itself, and I have argued for a more capacious definition of resistance to take account of Catholics' negotiation of elite culture.⁵

There is, therefore, more to Vaux and Tresham than their recusancy, their myriad sacrifices, and their avowed loyalism. These facets of their lives have much to teach us about how Catholics negotiated the limitations of a Protestant state, and about the character of their Catholicism *as distinct from* Protestant society — questions which remain valid — but they also reveal how Catholics lived *within* English society and were affected by some of the same concerns as their Protestant counterparts. This anti-sectarian approach, championed by Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott in their work on the Throckmortons of Coughton (another Catholic family closely related to both Vaux and Tresham) and by Michael Questier in his work on

² See John J. LaRocca, 'Vaux, William, third Baron Vaux', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online (hereafter *ODNB*): <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28165> (accessed 1 November 2019); Julian Lock, 'Tresham, Sir Thomas', *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27712> (accessed 1 November 2019). Throughout this article, these two men are referred to by their surnames only.

³ Godfrey Anstruther, *Vaux of Harrowden: a Recusant Family* (Newport: R.H. Johns Ltd., 1953), dedicated to Grace, Lady Vaux; Peter Marshall and Geoffrey Scott, eds. *Catholic Gentry in English Society: the Throckmortons of Coughton from Reformation to Emancipation* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009). The Vauxes also inspired a popular work: Jessie Childs, *God's Traitors: Terror & Faith in Elizabethan England* (London: The Bodley Head, 2014).

⁴ L.A. Verner, 'Catholic Communities and Kinship Networks of the Elizabethan Midlands', *Perichoresis* 13/1 (2015): 73-95; Susan M. Cogan, *Catholic Social Networks in Early Modern England. Kinship, Gender, and Coexistence* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2021). I am very grateful to Dr Cogan for sharing material from this book in advance of its publication.

⁵ Sandeep Kaushik, 'Resistance, Loyalty and Recusant Politics: Sir Thomas Tresham and the Elizabeth State', *Midland History* 21 (1996): 37-72; Katie McKeogh, 'Sir Thomas Tresham (1543-1605) and Early Modern Catholic Culture and Identity, 1580-1610', DPhil. Diss., (University of Oxford, 2017).

the Browne family, calls scholars to reappraise the experience of English Catholics within, not without, English society with greater nuance.⁶ Such insights should lead us to turn on their head analytical models that separate Catholics from English society — as anti-Catholic contemporaries sought to do — and have much to teach us about the transformation of English society during the Reformation period.

A sizeable literature on gender and the family has shown that, within a society that prized lineage and affinity, bonds between natal and marital kin provided essential support during times of trial.⁷ Scholars of the family have rightly acknowledged the potential of the Reformation to divide families along confessional fault-lines. Following the terminology coined by John Bossy in his canonical *English Catholic Community*, scholars have emphasised ties of unity and examples of steadfastness.⁸ However, as Marshall and Scott have observed, while Bossy broke new ground in treating Catholicism as a species of non-conformity, his approach was nevertheless limited to 'the society of Catholics, rather than Catholics in society'.⁹ Meanwhile, a focus on the missionary clergy and their politics has characterised internal divisions within the English Catholic community along the factional lines drawn by particular debates such as those surrounding recusancy or the vexed question of the English Archpriest.¹⁰ James Kelly has argued that shared faith was not itself sufficient for some Catholic families in arranging matches for their children. Instead, he finds evidence in the Petre family of a marital strategy 'transforming a marriage partnership of religious convenience into a full-blown politically-charged alliance' in order to crystallize support for the Jesuits.¹¹ Moreover, disagreements within these 'politically-inspired' marriages and wider kin were caused by 'political difference over Jesuit allegiance'.¹² Both historiographical traditions

⁶ Marshall and Scott, eds. *Catholic Gentry*.

⁷ V.M. Larmine, *Wealth, Kinship and Culture: the Seventeenth-Century Newdigates of Arbury and their World* (Woodbridge, 1995); Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes, *The Gentry in England and Wales, 1500-1700* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), 24-7, 50, 91-6; Marshall and Scott, eds. *Catholic Gentry*, esp. 13; Keith Wrightson, 'Kinship in an English Village: Terling, Essex 1500-1700', in Richard M. Smith, ed. *Land, Kinship and Life-Cycle* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 313-32; David Cressy, 'Kinship and Kin Interaction in Early Modern England', *Past & Present* (hereafter *P&P*) 113 (1986): 38-69; Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900. England, France and the United States of America* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994).

⁸ John Bossy, *The English Catholic Community, 1570-1850* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1975).

⁹ Marshall and Scott, eds. *Catholic Gentry*, 1. The anti-sectarian approach has also been championed in Michael Questier, *Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c.1550-1640* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 3.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 18 argues that Catholic politics shaped family relationships.

¹¹ James E. Kelly, 'Counties Without Borders? Religious Politics, Kinship Networks and the Formation of Catholic Communities', *Historical Research* 91/251 (2018): 22-38, at 31.

¹² *Ibid.*, 36.

risk the assumption that families with shared religious affiliation did not experience division, or only did so when they disagreed about specifically religious matters, that those who shared a minority religious identity cast off the trappings of quotidian squabbles in order to sustain each other. This is not to say that scholars have portrayed English Catholics as homogeneous, nor is it argued here that the experience of persecution with its attendant social ostracisation did not engender bonds of unity. Instead, this article makes a subtler point about experiences that might undermine the natural human impulse to draw together. This argument confirms the insights of scholars writing on kinship outside of the confessional context. Naomi Tadmor observed that ‘relationships among kin were often marked by negative tension and disappointment’ while confirming the close emotional bonds often present between kin.¹³ Despite his optimistic view of the possibilities of kinship, David Cressy acknowledged that the law courts were frequently sites of family strife.¹⁴

Early modern families recognised the importance of strong marital bonds between coreligionists; ties often fastened over several generations.¹⁵ Marriages were usually transacted by parents, and particular attention was paid to lineage, status, and financial security. Studies of the Petre family by Kelly and Jeffrey Hankins professed confidence in the commitment of Catholics to engineering marriages with other like-minded (in this case, Jesuit-supporting) Catholic families.¹⁶ Yet while some Catholic families did pursue marital strategies designed to protect a tradition of confessional identity, these were neither uniform nor consistent, even within kinship circles.¹⁷ A successful marriage for any family in this period might bear certain hallmarks: healthy children, male heirs, and the protection of the family’s good name and estate. Other markers might include local standing and a reputation for piety, charity, good governance, and generous entertainment.¹⁸ None of these was confessionally-bounded, and though faith permeated all aspects of peoples’ lives, it will be instructive here to think about Catholics beyond the singular fact of their Catholicism.

In order to demonstrate the operation of family division between otherwise united Catholic kin, three case studies are examined here,

¹³ Naomi Tadmor, ‘Early Modern English Kinship in the Long Run: Reflections on Continuity and Change’, *Continuity and Change* 25/1 (2010): 15-48, at 26-27.

¹⁴ Cressy, ‘Kinship and Kin Interaction’, 52, 68.

¹⁵ This point is also made in McKeogh, ‘Sir Thomas Tresham’, 47, Cogan, *Catholic Social Networks*, 70, and Verner, ‘Catholic Communities’, 83.

¹⁶ Kelly, ‘Counties Without Borders?’, Jeffrey R. Hankins, ‘Papists, Power, and Puritans: Catholic Officeholding and the Rise of the “Puritan Faction” in Early-Seventeenth-Century Essex’, *Catholic Historical Review* 95/4 (2009): 689-717, esp. 701-702.

¹⁷ Verner, ‘Catholic Communities’, 80; Cogan, *Catholic Social Networks*, 69-127, *passim*; Questier, *Catholicism and Community*, 2.

¹⁸ See Heal and Holmes, *Gentry*, 51-2 for an exposition of the ideal achievements of gentry families.

all of which concern Tresham and his Vaux nieces and nephews. In order to help the reader to understand what happened and why, a certain amount of description will be necessary, but the colourful sources quoted will also elucidate how some family members responded to acrimony. The analysis evinces the uncomfortable fact that mutual support within Catholic families was often hard-won, and sacred bonds of shared religion and experience could be shaken, even broken, by earthly concerns. This does not mean that kin did not support each other, nor that Catholic kin did not strive to sustain each other. The trials of the Vaux and Tresham families were neither caused nor ameliorated by their shared faith, but, as will be seen, individual family members were all too aware that their experiences were coloured by their Catholicism.

Case-studies permit the assessment of the broader themes of family and religious politics, which are otherwise difficult to assess with nuance across vast temporal distance, by magnifying their operation. It will not be possible to venture into all interpretive pathways arising from these examples; analysis of knotty legal issues, gender politics, and the history of emotions are left for other scholars. Instead, light is shone on the discord that sometimes arose within Catholic families, problems which are far removed from artificial binaries such as resistance and compromise, and from theological debates. These case-studies elucidate the priorities governing Catholic parents and land-owners, and another visible strand is youth. This article thus looks diagonally across generations to consider interactions between second-degree relations: aunts, uncles, nieces, and nephews.¹⁹ The ill-fated elite Catholic families here were ruined not by their Catholicism or by anti-Catholic legislation alone, but by the same forces that laid low other elites: messy familial legal entanglements and money.

Historians recognise that individuals tended not to use the modifiers 'step', 'half', or 'in law' — Tresham called Vaux his 'brother', though he was really his brother-in-law — but the ubiquity of remarriage and consequent step- and half-families in this period did not preclude acrimony. When a man remarried, his children might reasonably harbour some resentment towards the union, with its transferral of anticipated bequests to subsequent children, as well as the potential intrusion of a step-mother.²⁰ Much has been made in studies of the Vaux and Tresham families of their close ties, of the fraternal bonds

¹⁹ Consideration of youth and the Reformation goes back to Susan Brigden, 'Youth and the English Reformation', *P&P* 95 (1982): 36-67; see also Alexandra Walsham, 'The Reformation of the Generations: Youth, Age and Religious Change in England 1500-1700', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th series, 21 (2011): 93-121. A particularly relevant study is Lucy Underwood, *Childhood, Youth and Religious Dissent in Post-Reformation England* (Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

²⁰ Bernard Capp, *The Ties That Bind: Siblings, Family, and Society in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 102; Heal and Holmes, *Gentry*, 83-4.

between the respective patriarchs and matriarchs.²¹ Even after years of considerable tribulation, Tresham would call Vaux his ‘dear beloved’ and ‘golden, gilded Lord’.²² In this article, family harmony is coloured with inglorious misery in order to demonstrate the complexity of family politics. Such a phenomenon was present even among Catholics who considered themselves persecuted, and transcended the bonds of confessional alliance, and we must use this knowledge to temper lenses of idealisation.

Vaux and his first wife, Elizabeth née Beaumont, had four children: Henry, Eleanor, Elizabeth, and Anne. Following his wife’s death in 1562, Vaux married Mary, the sister of his fellow Northamptonshire resident Tresham, who bore him five children: George, Edward, Ambrose, Muriel, and Catherine. Tresham and his wife Muriel (née Throckmorton) were married at around the same time, and became the parents of nine surviving children, of whom six daughters were married into other Catholic families with unusually generous marriage portions of up to £3,000 each, likely a manifestation of Tresham’s aspirations for his family’s honour and status.²³ Vaux’s reputed incompetence in the management of his estate was matched by Tresham’s talent, and the latter was accustomed to providing counsel in legal, financial, and social matters despite Vaux’s superior noble status; it was, for example, Tresham’s custom to draft letters for Vaux. The Treshams were sources of advice for several Vauxes, though relations could also be acrimonious. Such was the case with the marriages of George Vaux to Elizabeth Roper, Muriel Vaux to George Fulshurst, and the marriage portion of Anne Vaux. All three had serious legal, financial, and personal ramifications for both families between 1584 and 1600 against a backdrop of Catholic persecution. These cases are examined sequentially in the remainder of this article.

I: George Vaux and Elizabeth Roper

Between November 1581 and early 1583, Vaux and Tresham were close prisoners in the Fleet, having refused to swear to the charge of

²¹ Anstruther, *Vaux*, 96; Cogan, *Catholic Social Networks*, 117.

²² Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Report on Manuscripts in Various Collections*, vol. 3 (London: H.M.S.O., 1904), 81 (hereafter *HMCR* iii).

²³ Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), 121, gives details of the average marriage portions across the social spectrum. Tresham had been knighted at Kenilworth in 1575 alongside his brother-in-law Sir William Catesby, who had also married a Throckmorton daughter, Anne. By this time he was also Lord of the Manor of Rothwell, and commissioned the cruciform market or sessions house for its market square to advertise his membership of the ruling elite and to record his affection for his county. See McKeogh, ‘Sir Thomas Tresham’, 176–86 and *idem*, ‘Tresham [née Throckmorton], Muriel’, *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/odnb/9780198614128.013.90000369156> (accessed 27 June 2021).

having harboured the Jesuit proto-martyr Edmund Campion, for which they were also fined £1,000 and 500 marks respectively.²⁴ Four months into their imprisonment, in February 1582, they had further disgraced themselves by hearing mass in Vaux's cell, an offence that carried the penalty of one year's imprisonment and a fine of 200 marks.²⁵ However, some time in early 1583, Tresham was under house arrest at Hoxton, Shoreditch, an inadequate situation which he nonetheless found preferable to the Fleet.²⁶ Vaux had secured a similar arrangement and was renting in Hackney. On 19 April 1583, Tresham drafted a letter from Vaux to a 'Mr. Farmer', likely the conformist Catholic George Fermor of Easton Neston to ask for advice.²⁷ His estate under duress from fines and imprisonment, Vaux had been offered a 'very worshipful match' with 'no small portion' amounting to £3,500 for one of his sons. Henry, Vaux's eldest son from his first marriage, declined to marry at all, discerning a religious vocation.²⁸ Vaux therefore hoped that Fermor would assist him in transferring Henry's inheritance to the next son, George, from his second marriage, without arousing the suspicion of the family of Vaux's late first wife — the Beaumonts of Grace Dieu, Leicestershire — who he thought would try to impede the matter to protect their family's interests.²⁹

Vaux's children had spent a part of their upbringing in the Beaumont household with their dowager grandmother Elizabeth (née Hastings).³⁰ By the time Vaux came to arrange his sons' marriages, the surviving family members included Vaux's mother-in-law, Elizabeth, and brothers-in-law, Francis and Henry Beaumont, both

²⁴ For an in-depth account see Kaushik, 'Resistance, Loyalty and Recusant Politics' and McKeogh, 'Sir Thomas Tresham', 89-110.

²⁵ 23 Eliz. Cap. 1; The National Archives, London (hereafter TNA) SP 12/152 fol. 97r, 'Mr. Richard Topclyffe's note of particulars against William Deane and Edward Osborne, seminary priests: celebration of mass in the Fleet prison before Lord Vaux, Sir Thomas Tresham, Mr. Tirwhitt, and others...'; John Roche Dasent, ed. *Acts of the Privy Council of England, 1542-1631* (hereafter *APC*), 32 vols. (London, 1890-1907), 13:360, online edn: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/acts-privy-council/vol13/pp351-375> (accessed 26 May 2020).

²⁶ British Library Additional (hereafter BL Add.) MS 39828, fol. 84r, Lady Tresham to the Countess of Bedford, 27 May 1583, draft in Tresham's hand.

²⁷ For the Fermors, principally of Oxfordshire, see Alan Davidson, 'Roman Catholicism in Oxfordshire from the Late Elizabethan Period to the Civil War, 1580-1640', PhD Diss. (University of Bristol, 1970), 70-74.

²⁸ Henry's discernment of a religious vocation is attested in John J. LaRocca, 'Vaux, William'; LaRocca, 'Vaux, William'; Anstruther, *Vaux*, 205-6.

²⁹ BL Add. MS 39828, fols. 82r-3v, Lord Vaux to Mr. Farmer, 19 April 1583, draft in Tresham's hand.

³⁰ Anstruther, *Vaux*, 108. It should be noted that the Beaumont estate, too, had undergone significant trials. Having been lost to her parents by her husband, Grace Dieu was returned to Vaux's widowed mother-in-law in an act of kindness by her cousin Francis, 2nd earl of Huntingdon: N.G. Jones, 'Beaumont, John', *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1873> (accessed 4 June 2020) and Claire Cross, 'Hastings, Francis, 2nd earl of Huntingdon', *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12566> (accessed 4 June 2020).

lawyers.³¹ When the requisite deed was eventually signed on 20 April 1585, Vaux's second son George replaced Henry as heir, and the Vaux estate was thus entailed away from the Vaux-Beaumont children. Vaux had duly approached George regarding the 'very worshipful match', but the new heir was not to be persuaded. Instead, George married Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Sir John Roper of Lynsted, Kent, at the Vauxes' Harrowden seat on 25 July 1585. The circumstances were inopportune: George would not reach his majority until September and his father was confined to the family house at Hackney, near London. The marriage contradicted the terms of a settlement made on 20 April of that year to protect the Vaux patrimony from the impairment of recusancy fines and confiscation, and was very much against Vaux's wishes. In a sombre coincidence, Vaux's son, and George's brother, Edward, died at Hackney at around the same time.³²

Within this paternalistic society, first marriages were typically arranged by the heads of the respective families, and it was not uncommon for agreements, particularly those concerning heirs, to be dictated in wills. Such was the case for Tresham: it was set down in his grandfather's will that, as the heir presumptive, Tresham would be raised in the Throckmorton household and marry into that family.³³ Ideally, a bride's family would provide a sufficiently generous marriage portion to secure a socially advantageous match, elevating their daughter and, by association, her natal kin. Despite these utilitarian preoccupations, mutual affection was generally deemed to be important. Bonds of lineage, religion, or locality were important considerations, as was the desire to consolidate and protect the family estates for future generations. Reinforcing these connections between families could ensure much-needed allies in uncertain times.³⁴ But with so much at stake, the legal and financial considerations could be highly complex, and proceedings were not always transacted in good faith. Moreover, the arrangements made prior to a marriage had import for the happiness of the union; problematic settlements and their mishandling occupied 'much of the marital and interfamilial litigation in the central courts of Tudor and Stuart England'.³⁵

³¹ J.H. Baker, 'Beaumont, Francis', *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1870> (accessed 4 June 2020).

³² Anstruther, *Vaux*, 206.

³³ TNA PCC PROB 11/42B, fol. 150v, Will of Sir Thomas Tresham, 4 May 1559.

³⁴ Ralph Houlbrooke observed this feature of unions from the medieval period onwards: Ralph Houlbrooke, *The English Family, 1450-1700* (London: Routledge, 1984, repr. 2014), 66.

³⁵ Heal and Holmes, *Gentry*, 68. For an enlightening microhistory of another unhappy Catholic marriage, see Ralph Houlbrooke, *Love and Dishonour in Elizabethan England. Two Families and a Failed Marriage* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2018).

Marriages therefore had implications beyond husband and wife, and youthful indiscretion held up a broken mirror to the parents. As the head of the family, a father's ability to mould his children into responsible adults capable of upholding the family honour was a marker of the success of his life's work and, therefore, his legacy. Paternal anxieties were not limited to Catholics alone: Felicity Heal and Clive Holmes demonstrated that patriarchs were often extremely cautious about the trustworthiness of their heirs in taking on the responsibilities of family leadership.³⁶ If successful governance of the family was understood to be the healthy society in microcosm, paternal failings frayed the very fabric of society. By circumventing his father's authority, George had undermined the Vaux name — reputational damage that he could scarcely afford. Vaux's Star Chamber trial and related convictions for his Catholicism had made him notorious, while being under house arrest was an embarrassing state ill-befitting a nobleman. Marriage without Vaux's permission rendered void the arrangements that had formed a protective ring around the Vaux estate. In this case, the fact that the Ropers were also Catholics was secondary to the chief concerns of a nobleman: the protection of his honour, reputation, and estate.³⁷ The Ropers were not impoverished. Sir John Roper later claimed to have provided his daughter with a portion of £1,500 with an additional £400 in 'jewels and apparel', but Vaux felt keenly the loss of the earlier offer of £3,500 from another (unknown) family, a much-needed boost to the Vaux coffers.³⁸

The administration of the Vaux estate was complicated further still by the death of Vaux's eldest son Henry in November 1587, leaving only two brothers: George and Ambrose, both from Vaux's second marriage. George would now inherit the Vaux barony, and the younger Ambrose the family estates. When Sir John Roper went to law to guarantee his new son-in-law's inheritance and thus safeguard his daughter's familial and financial security in 1589, he drew Ambrose into his plans, circumventing Vaux's authority for a second time. When Ambrose levied a fine on his father's property, so that the land passed to George, Vaux was landed in still hotter financial water.³⁹ It is not clear why Ambrose should have cooperated in such a self-defeating scheme, all accomplished without Vaux or Tresham's knowledge and when neither was at liberty. With the country under threat from

³⁶ Heal and Holmes, *Gentry*, 45.

³⁷ Elizabeth Roper was the great niece of Margaret Roper, eldest daughter of Sir Thomas More: Margaret Bowker, 'Roper, [*née* More] Margaret', *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/24071> (accessed 12 November 2019); *The Complete Peerage*, ed. G. E. Cokayne, revised and enlarged by Geoffrey H. White, 2nd edn, 13 vols (London: the St Catherine Press, 1910-40), 12.1: 679.

³⁸ Anstruther, *Vaux*, 209.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 207-8; *Oxford English Dictionary* (hereafter *OED*) s.v. 'fine', definition III 9 b.

Spanish invasion, Vaux was in archiepiscopal custody and Tresham was being held at Buckden, Lincolnshire and then at Ely. The acrimony between the three parties, with Roper and Tresham each particularly resentful of the other and Vaux apparently uninvolved, seemed insoluble, and the Privy Council had to arbitrate.⁴⁰

Seemingly, it was not Vaux but Tresham who stood between Sir John Roper, his daughter Elizabeth Vaux, his new son-in-law George, and their share of the Vaux estate. But though Roper's case rested on defaming Tresham as a meddler who was taking advantage of Vaux, Vaux himself showed no sign of resenting Tresham's involvement. He petitioned the Privy Council to release Tresham from prison, 'as such conueyances and assurances as abouesaid cannot be made . . . without the personall presence of his Brother', and on 20 March 1590 the Council duly wrote to Tresham's gaoler, Richard Arkinsall, to release Tresham to London until 8 July on a bond of £500.⁴¹ Vaux was accustomed to involving Tresham in his affairs, and seems to have relied heavily (and willingly) on him. On 4 July Roper wrote to Lord Burghley, accusing Tresham of interference, manipulation, and slander, all contrived to control Vaux and to secure Tresham's own liberty, 'for the endinge of his causes: and to slaunder me'. Tresham had acted, in Roper's words, as 'the commaunder of him [Vaux] & all his' so that Vaux 'dare not more offend him, then a childe his Master havinge a rodde in his hande'.⁴² In Roper's account, Tresham was vindictive, intent on ensuring that George and Elizabeth were left with nothing: 'vpon malyce to his nephew Master George Vaux for maryinge my daughter . . . [Tresham] did poyson the booke of conveyance of all my Lord Vaux his landes'. Roper argued that Tresham stood as gatekeeper to Vaux, desiring that Roper 'must have noe end with my Lord Vaux, except suche as he will make wherby he maye still rule & reygne over my Lord & all his'.⁴³

There were further allegations of Tresham's scheming from Roper's pen: that Tresham had stolen a manor from Vaux, who was so utterly deceived by him that Tresham knew of the Council's proceedings because they had been 'speedyly delyuered vnto him by the simple Lord Vaux'. The alternative interpretation is that Vaux sought Tresham's counsel and updated Tresham on all developments. Roper nevertheless had the Privy Council believe that he himself was now living in fear of Tresham's retribution, for his family's sake: 'for that I knowe howe muche he would malyce me, & what a revenginge course he will take

⁴⁰ *APC*, 21:95, online: <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/acts-privy-council/vol21/pp76-100> (accessed 12 November 2019).

⁴¹ TNA SP 12/233, fol. 13r, Sir John Roper to Lord Burghley, 4 July 1590.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

agaynste hys nephew my sonne in lawe & my poor daughter; yf he should knowe that I deliyuered these notes vnto you'.⁴⁴

Roper's strategy was supposed to halt all involvement by Tresham in Vaux and Roper affairs: 'that Sir Tho. Tresam may be seuered from vs, & discharged from dealinge further therin ... I knowe he is determined to rule & over rule all'.⁴⁵ But even if the cause and the strength of Roper's accusations moved him to effusiveness, Tresham's defence reminded his detractors of the many storms he and Vaux had weathered together, extolling the virtues of his friendship with Vaux:

whose good will even from my cradle I haue in highest degree enjoyed; and firmest friendship by the space of manie a Prentishipp; in strongest allye betwene vs vnited: who hath also loved me longest, esteemed mee dearest, and by the space of full Twentie seven yeares (in matters of greatest weight) most truste in me hathe ever reposed.⁴⁶

The competing accounts of Tresham and Roper invite myriad interpretations. Roper's expectations may have been reasonable, and Tresham may have been meddling unduly, perhaps even because he expected to benefit — or for his sister to benefit — either in the medium or long term, though his involvement in George's marriage would have deprived his sister's eldest son of his financial security. Alternatively, the Ropers were the rapacious party, seeing in Vaux a nobleman with a poor grasp of estates that might be more lucrative in the right hands, if only Tresham could be circumvented. The inverted relationship between Vaux and Tresham, in which Vaux, the nobleman, relied upon the talents and (considerable) efforts of his gentleman brother-in-law to manage his affairs, is a characterisation which has been reproduced by every commentator on the families, both hostile and friendly, from their own time to the present day, and is thus difficult to overcome.⁴⁷

Tresham's efforts to protect the Vaux and Tresham estates were ultimately frustrated within two generations. The Vaux barony fell into a two hundred-year abeyance after Edward, fourth Baron Vaux (the son of George Vaux and Elizabeth Roper) died without a legitimate heir, and his brother, Henry, held the title for only two years before he himself died without issue in 1663.⁴⁸ Harrowden Hall, the Vaux seat, was taken over by Thomas Watson, third son of Edward Watson, Lord Rockingham, in 1695, and was eventually repurchased in the late nineteenth century by the then Lord Vaux, having been

⁴⁴ TNA SP 12/233, fol. 22r, Sir John Roper to Lord Burghley, 8 July 1590.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ TNA SP 12/233, fol. 21r, Tresham to Lord Burghley, 7 July 1590.

⁴⁷ See Anstruther, *Vaux*, 204; Childs, *God's Traitors*, 92, 214.

⁴⁸ The abeyance was terminated in 1838 in favour of George Charles Mostyn: *Complete Peerage*, ed. Cokayne, 12.2: 226-7.

substantially rebuilt.⁴⁹ Tresham's seat, Rushton Hall, was sold in 1619, just fourteen years after his death, to Sir William Cockayne of the City of London in order to settle the debts of the Tresham's impecunious son Lewis, who had been created baronet in 1611.⁵⁰ Neither advancement nor drastic sale could save the Tresham name and estate: Sir William, Tresham's grandson by Lewis, died without male heirs in 1642 and the family name disappeared along with the short-lived baronetcy.⁵¹

The origins of the acquaintance between George Vaux and the Ropers are not clear. Sir John Roper's estates do not seem to have extended beyond Kent, and connections with the Vauxes and their kin are tenuous. A nephew of Tresham's wife Muriel, John Throckmorton, married Agnes Wilford, who sent their daughter Margaret to be a companion to Anne, the daughter of Sir William and Margaret Roper. Margaret Roper was a second cousin of Agnes' mother, Mary Browne, through the latter's sister Catherine, wife of William Roper, a great-nephew of Sir John Roper's father Christopher.⁵²

Aunts and uncles were active in the upbringing of their siblings' children, and approaches to correct youthful misbehaviour reflected the values held by older family members. Catholic families raising children amid persecution were perhaps especially likely to insist on preserving a family's reputation and protective kinship circles, but these were universal preoccupations. Tresham wrote to his sister and her wayward son George to try to restore family harmony. Seven years later, he continued to remonstrate with his nephew George for the trouble his 'braynles baynfeull matche' had caused, trouble that exceeded even anti-Catholic persecution: 'so hathe the lamentable sequelles therof since proved the heviest crosses that happed me in this my twelve yeares imprisonment, and adversitie'.⁵³ This was not presumptuous interference but a response to Vaux's request that Tresham try to influence George. Tresham's letter focused on the burden George had placed upon his parents' marital harmony and on the family's already impaired local standing, 'Deeper wedginge in my Lord your father into impleacable miserie . . . Bereavinge and defacinge them at their owne

⁴⁹ 'Parishes: Great Harrowden', in L.F. Salzman, ed. *A History of the County of Northampton* (London: Victoria County History, 1937-2013), 4:178-185, online: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/northants/vol4/pp178-185> (accessed 1 June 2020).

⁵⁰ Nikolaus Pevsner and Bridget Cherry, *Northamptonshire*, 2nd edn., rev. Bridget Cherry (New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 398.

⁵¹ *Complete Baronetage*, ed. G.E. Cokayne, 6 vols (Exeter: Pollard, 1900), 1:56-7; Lock, 'Tresham, Sir Thomas'.

⁵² Jan Broadway, 'Agnes Throckmorton: a Jacobean Recusant Woman', in Marshall and Scott, eds. *Catholic Gentry*, 123-41, at 138; J.H. Baker, 'Browne, Sir Humphrey', *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/69359> (accessed 22 April 2021); *The Visitations of Essex in 1552, 1558, 1570, 1612 and 1634*, ed. Walter C. Metcalfe, Harleian Society Visitation Series 13-14 (London, 1878-9), 13:166, 322; *The Visitation of Kent, Taken in the Years 1619-21*, ed. Robert Hovenden, Harleian Society Visitation Series 42 (London, 1898), 82-3.

⁵³ BL Add. MS 39828, fols. 169r-170v, Tresham to George Vaux, 9 November 1592, at fol. 169r.

doores of their woonted unpriceable credit in the countrey', and stressed the divisions George had wrought between their two families, 'Yowe and yours att warres with them & theirs dissolving the Autentique amitie conteyned divers discentes betwene Harrowdon and Rushton families'.⁵⁴

In a letter sent a few months later, Tresham saw no improvement in his nephew's conduct and, having failed to appeal to George's filial duty, focused instead on religious imperatives:

Your falting in highest degree towards mee I in private reprooved as became a kinsman & Christian. But you have done neither the one nor the other towards me. God forgeve you & graunte you ever more of his grace. Smallie to my profit prove I the words of the profit most trewe: *Inimici homines domestici ejus* [a man's enemies shall be of his own household, Matthew 10:36].⁵⁵

Tresham appealed again to George's sense of familial duty as a nephew and son in a further letter shortly afterwards. He was defensive about his own role in the situation, 'not onely ever to dyscharge a lovyng uncles dew in behovefully advyng you, but pryncypally to performe the offyce of faythfullest frende in petitioneswyse besechyng and instantly beggyng of you what in fyllyall duty you most owght'. As in previous letters, he emphasised George's power to relieve his parents' distress, 'to the spedy relevyng and ryddyng yor honorable parentes forth of thes ther many yeares inspeacable myseryes'.⁵⁶

Advice-giving within families was both inter- and intra- generational; Tresham counselled George's parents while railing against him. He wrote to his sister, recommending how best to curtail her son's recklessness and to minimise the damage incurred, and he reassured her that George's marital kin, the Ropers, were to share the blame for having 'perswadeth him [George] to the contrarie, and not meanlie pittie their [the Vauxes'] lamentable plight'.⁵⁷ Tresham was virulent in his criticism of his nephew's conduct, calling him an 'arrantest Asse' for having being tricked by his new wife's family and their lawyer, 'Mallorie their maligner'. If George had not in fact been thus manipulated, and had had full awareness of his actions, it would be worse still: 'he is to be reputed a monster then a manne, yea a viper then a Vaux, that will remorceleslie rent out the bowelles of his honorable parentes'.⁵⁸

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 170v.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, fols. 178r-180r, Tresham to George Vaux draft in Tresham's hand, 15 January 1593; *ibid.*, fol. 180v, Tresham to George Vaux, draft in Tresham's hand, 15 February 1593, at fol. 180v.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, fols. 193r-195v, Tresham to George Vaux, draft in Tresham's hand, 28 February 1593, at fol. 193r.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, fols. 191r-192v, Tresham to Lady Vaux, 22 February 1593, at fol. 191r.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Tresham chided Ambrose, too, for his part in his own and his family's undoing: 'Amonge Christianes yt hathe accustomed beene saied, Denie not right unto a Deuille. Suche hathe beene your reprobate demeanure towards your honorable lovinge parentes: And suche ys your loose, riotous & synnefull misgovernement devulged & published to the world'.⁵⁹ The Treshams' further attempts to rescue the Vaux estate were laborious: Tresham wrote to Vaux's kinsman Cheyney about a manor, to his sister Lady Vaux with more advice, and he drafted a letter and brief on Vaux's behalf for the Lord Treasurer, including a fair copy by his steward George Levens to be sent to a scribe. Lady Tresham wrote to her niece Muriel explaining the case in May 1593.⁶⁰

The marriage of George Vaux to Elizabeth Roper had repercussions for the whole Vaux family, and for the Treshams. They exemplify the sorts of problems experienced by gentry and noble families in the period, irrespective of confessional identity. In Vaux's and Tresham's case, anti-Catholic penalties exacerbated the situation. Roper was able to take advantage of their imprisonments, and their already precarious financial state meant that they had to seek the support of others to be able to settle. Tresham's nephews added to his existing burdens, not least in consuming much of his time and energy. His frequent exhortations to them show him trying to remind them to reverse their abnegation of charity and kinsmanly duty. Tresham's private defence of Elizabeth Vaux née Roper and her children, despite all that had passed before, raises doubts about the aspersions cast by Sir John Roper on Tresham's motivations. Even after George's premature death, the familial rifts caused by his behaviour were still being felt. Tresham wrote to Vaux in 1594 to encourage him to support George's widow and children, lest they suffer as a result of their father's thoughtlessness. Roper's manipulation had, he told his wife, succeeded in 'settinge him at implacable variaunce with his dearest friendes', but he nevertheless continued to help them.⁶¹

Despite his pleas for clemency in her widowhood, the enmity between Elizabeth Vaux and Tresham deepened.⁶² In 1599, some

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, fols. 197r-197v, Tresham to Ambrose Vaux, 8 March 1593, at fol. 197r.

⁶⁰ *HMCRC* iii, 71-2, Tresham to Cheyney, 2 April 1593; *ibid.*, 72-3, Tresham to Lady Vaux, 15 April 1593; *ibid.*, 75-6, Lady Tresham to Merrill Vaux, 8 May 1593.

⁶¹ BL Add. MS 39828, fols. 273r-274r, Tresham to Lady Tresham, 23 November 1594, at fol. 273r.

⁶² Catholic widows used their legal status to play a significant role in supporting missionary priests and wielded unusual influence, even compared to other widows. See, for example, Jennifer Binczewski, 'Power in Vulnerability: Widows and Priest Holes in the Early Modern English Catholic Community', *British Catholic History* 35/1 (2020): 1-24; M.B. Rowlands, 'Recusant Women, 1560-1640', in M. Prior, ed. *Women in English Society, 1500-1800*, (London: Routledge, 1991): 149-180; Jenna Lay, *Beyond the Cloister: Catholic Englishwomen and Early Modern Literary Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016); Broadway, 'Agnes Throckmorton'. For widowhood more broadly, see Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550: marriage and family, property and careers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

fourteen years after the Roper-Vaux marriage and after Vaux's death, Tresham held Elizabeth responsible for leading her brother-in-law Ambrose to pursue Tresham in the courts. She had done so, Tresham believed, in order to further injure Tresham and his sister, Mary, Vaux's widow, by trying to diminish the inheritance Mary received from her husband and to prevent her from making her own will. For Tresham, Ambrose's part in this could be minimised as foolishness, but he had been led astray by the malice of Elizabeth Vaux: 'ane vntowarde, and gyddy hedded yonge man, evermore sterner to his bayne, and in reprobateness to his honorable parentes, by his syster in law the wydow Vawx'.⁶³ In fact, Tresham connected all the trials that had passed between him and the Vaux children since 1585 to Elizabeth's influence. His criticisms of her and of his nephews took self-evidently gendered form: she was the manipulative temptress, and Ambrose and George the wrong-headed knaves.⁶⁴ Indeed, in a long letter written in the summer of 1599 from close imprisonment in the Fleet to a Catholic kinsman — likely his cousin and namesake, Thomas Tresham of Newton — Tresham scarcely referred to Elizabeth by name, preferring to call her 'the wydowe'.⁶⁵

Elizabeth's perfidy was manifest not only in her hatred of Tresham, but in her disregard for legal process and truth. Elizabeth's unnamed 'pryncipall servant, and spetiallest agentt in this sute', a Catholic, 'scandalusly comytted open periurye'.⁶⁶ Elizabeth also targeted Vaux's widow Mary, trying to induce Ambrose to 'tak[e] away ^a great parte of his mothers smale portion of goods, notwithstanding her wyll, manifested to them, and published in cowrte, and notwithstandinge so fraudulently gott by them'.⁶⁷ This is likely a reference to a failed attempt by Ambrose to overturn his father's last wishes: a sentence confirming the will and codicil, dated 21 June 1599, shows that he had initiated a case against his father's executors (his mother among them), but that he had failed to convince the judge.⁶⁸ Under the apparent influence of Elizabeth and her agent, Ambrose used recusancy to prevent his mother from making a will and to disempower Tresham. He 'sovght to have dysabled the Lady Vaux to have made any wyll . . . And in

⁶³ BL Add. MS 39829, fols. 9r-14v, Tresham to ? [Thomas Tresham], summer 1599, at fol. 10r. By 'sterner to his bayne' Tresham likely means 'cast down to his destruction'.

⁶⁴ The honour of a gentleman's household was understood to represent his honour beyond it: Heal and Holmes, *Gentry*, 4-5. Moreover, elite young men were supposedly duty-bound to uphold their ancestors' honour: Richard Cust, 'Honour and Politics in Early Stuart England: The Case of Beaumont v. Hastings', *P&P* 149 (1995): 57-94, at 60.

⁶⁵ BL Add. MS 39829, fols. 9r-14v, at fol. 9v and *passim*.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 10r.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ TNA PROB 11/94/82, fol. 95.

selfe same sorte caused excommunication for recusancye to bee in open courte vsed agaynst me (I then presentt).⁶⁹

As will be seen later, this was not the only occasion on which Catholic kin used non-conformist identity against a coreligionist. Not only were some Catholics prepared to overlook religious ties in pursuit of legal victory and financial stability, but they were also capable of using Catholicism to discredit their opponents, however hypocritically. This casts doubt on several interconnected assumptions about English Catholics: that Catholic kin should be defined solely by their Catholicism, that faith transcended earthly concerns, and that Catholic kinship circles should be understood chiefly as systems of mutual support.

II: *Anne Vaux*

Kinship ties and shared religion sometimes failed to protect Catholic families from acrimony. Anne Vaux's pursuit of Tresham in Chancery brings into view several prominent historiographical themes outside the sphere of Catholic scholarship: single women, female litigants, and family disharmony. The following analysis not only evinces Heal and Holmes' observation that legal records show the gentry at their least endearing, but also supports an argument for considering Catholic elites using the same categories as for their Protestant counterparts, rather than casting them as a different species.

On 20 August 1593, Vaux made a will. He named Tresham and Sir Lewis Mordant his executors, his wife Mary his supervisor, and he remembered in his bequests the surviving children of his second marriage: Muriel, George, and Ambrose, and their heirs in the male line. Other familial bequests privileged Vaux's natal kin.⁷⁰ His niece, the orphaned Frances Burrowe, who was being brought up by Vaux's widowed daughter Eleanor, would receive £100, and her siblings the same amount shared between them.⁷¹ The children of Vaux's first marriage were, according to custom, absent from this will, but it may still have rankled.⁷² They were likely provided for by their late mother, but with no extant will we cannot be certain of the precise arrangements. Anne was left an annuity of four marks per annum for the rest of her life by her maternal grandmother Elizabeth Beaumont, who also named her 'full executrice', and left her 'all the rest of my goodes vnbequeathed moveable or vnmmoveable whatsoever'.⁷³

⁶⁹ BL Add. MS 39829, fols. 9r-14v, at fol. 10r.

⁷⁰ TNA PROB 11/88/344 fol. 271r. For Vaux's forbears see Cockayne, ed. *Complete Peerage*, 8:18-19.

⁷¹ Maud Vaux had married Anthony Burrows and died in around 1581. The death of Edward Brooksby widowed Vaux's daughter Eleanor in the same year: Anstruther, *Vaux*, 179.

⁷² Houlbrooke, *The English Family*, 211-22.

⁷³ TNA PROB 11/72/680, fol. 415, at fol. 415v.

Why Vaux should have made this will when he did is not clear — we may venture that poor health played a part — but the will is essential context for the action that followed, even if no case for causation is made. Vaux's health was in decline and he may already have succumbed to what Tresham referred to as his 'present sicknes' and the deafness that was hampering communication by July 1594.⁷⁴ He would die the following year, in August 1595. Though Tresham had been permitted to return to his Northamptonshire home in early 1593 following twelve years of imprisonment and house arrest, he was nearer London, probably at Hoxton, in early February 1594, and was shortly afterwards committed close prisoner in the Fleet until late July. The precise cause of this imprisonment is not clear, but the government questioned him about seeking prominence among a community of Catholics.⁷⁵

Anne, Vaux's youngest daughter from his first marriage, began proceedings in Chancery to sue Tresham for her marriage portion of £500 in the Hilary Term of 1594.⁷⁶ The following term, Tresham was preparing notes for his lawyers to answer Anne's bill of complaint.⁷⁷ The case would proceed for almost a whole calendar year, from 25 January until 26 November. Tresham repeatedly delayed proceedings by insisting that he needed to consult documents held at his Northamptonshire seat, but the judge eventually found in Anne's favour and Tresham paid her the full amount in the form of £300 and a choice of bonds due to him that year for the rest.⁷⁸

Our evidence for the case comes from two sources and is skewed towards Tresham's perspective. On the official side, there are eleven brief entries recording the proceedings in the entry books of decrees and orders.⁷⁹ Neither the bill of complaint nor the final judgement survive. Tresham's notes for his counsel in response to the bill are extant in his private papers, together with the letters he wrote to his wife about Anne and the case. Both provide ample detail about Tresham's

⁷⁴ Tresham wrote to convey by letter a message that he had not been able to communicate in person: 'I did forbear to impart somewhat to you, in respect of your deafness': *HMCRC* iii, 80, 22 July 1594.

⁷⁵ TNA SP 12/248, fols. 88r-v, Interrogatories to be mynistered vnto Sir Thomas Tresham Knight, 25 March 1594; *ibid.*, fol. 89r-v, Answer of Sr Thomas Tresham knight, 25 March 1594.

⁷⁶ Mark Nicholls, 'Vaux, Anne', *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28159> (accessed 4 June 2020).

⁷⁷ Hilary term 1593 began on 23 January and ended on 12 February. Easter term in that year began on 17 April and ended on Ascension Day, 9 May: C.R. Cheney, *Handbook of Dates for Students of English History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁷⁸ *HMCRC* iii, 82-4, Tresham to Lady Tresham, 1 November 1594; 84-6, Tresham to Lady Tresham, 2 November 1594.

⁷⁹ C33/85 A book, fols. 669r (25 January 1594), 713r-v (4 February 1594); C33/87 A book, fols. 67r (1 May 1594), 127v (13 May 1594), 191v (4 June 1594), 231v-232r (10 June 1594), 308r (19 June 1594), 375r (11 October 1594), 421v-422r (22 October 1594), 454v (29 October 1594), 541r-v (6 November 1594). The entries in the corresponding B books — C33/86 B book, C33/88 B book — show no variation.

responses to the case against him, the impact on family relations, and how the outcome of the case played out, but we lack equivalent documentary evidence for Anne.

It will be helpful to spend some time analysing the proceedings of the case in detail here before offering any conclusions. At the core of the disagreement was the interpretation of an arrangement between Vaux and Tresham pertaining to the marriage portions of Vaux's three daughters from his first marriage: Anne, Eleanor, and Elizabeth.⁸⁰ Both parties agreed that Vaux had intended that each of his three daughters should have £500 'towards their marryage'.⁸¹ Eleanor had been widowed just four years into her marriage in 1581, and in March 1582 Elizabeth had, like her step-brothers Edward and Ambrose, travelled to the continent, where she would enter a convent. Her step-brothers visited a seminary as part of their travels before returning home.⁸²

Anne remained unmarried by design. In November 1594, Tresham wrote that 'Yt is well knowne that she hath preferred to lyue ane vnmarrried life', an elliptical reference to Anne's vocation. Her 'vnmarrried life' was certainly a remarkable one.⁸³ She had kept house with her widowed sister Eleanor Brooksby since the early 1580s.⁸⁴ The nature of this unusual household is already familiar to students of the missions of Jesuit and seminary priests in England, having been vividly evoked in the autobiographies of the Jesuits John Gerard and William Weston and in subsequent scholarly work.⁸⁵ Anne and Eleanor had been sheltering the Jesuit Superior Henry Garnet together and other priests and lay brothers, including hosting meetings of the Jesuits, since 1586. They conceived of their stewardship of this wing of the English mission as a religious vocation, and they continued to serve in this way until their deaths.⁸⁶ The dangerous practice of sheltering no less a figure than the Superior of the Jesuits necessitated frequent relocation to avoid detection. The household had already been subject to an

⁸⁰ Northamptonshire Record Office, Watson of Rockingham Papers, W(R)/337.

⁸¹ C33/87 A book, fol. 67r, 1 May 1594.

⁸² Anstruther, *Vaux*, 145, taking his evidence from a letter from the Jesuit Robert Persons: *Miscellanea IV*, Catholic Record Society, Records Series 4 (London: Catholic Record Society, 1907), 48-9.

⁸³ BL Add. MS 39828, fs. 275r-278v, Objections of Anne Vaux, November 1594, at fol. 275r.

⁸⁴ For Catholic sisters, see Kari B. McBride, 'Recusant Sisters: English Catholic Women and the Bonds of Learning', in *Sibling Relations and Gender in the Early Modern World: Sisters, Brothers and Others*, ed. Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), 28-39.

⁸⁵ John Gerard, *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, trans. Philip Caraman, intro. Graham Greene (London: Longman, 1951); William Weston, *The Autobiography of an Elizabethan*, trans. Philip Caraman, intro. Evelyn Waugh (London: Longmans, Green, & Co., 1955); R. Connelly, *The Women of the Catholic Resistance in England 1540-1680* (Edinburgh: Pentland Press, 1997); Mark Nicholls, *Investigating Gunpowder Plot* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991); Childs, *God's Traitors*.

⁸⁶ Anstruther, *Vaux*, 186.

unsuccessful government raid in October 1591, colourfully retold by John Gerard in his autobiography as a tale of wit, cunning, and steadfastness on Anne's part. In 1593 Garnet referred to them as 'the two sisters the widow and the virgin, illustrious by birth, fidelity, and holiness of life, whom I sometimes in my thoughts liken to the two women who used to lodge Our Lord'. A decade later, Anne would travel with Garnet, even assuming the alias 'Mrs Perkins' to his 'Mr. Perkins' — a predictable cause of scandal which was seized upon by the government — and was held and questioned in the Tower of London following his arrest in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot.⁸⁷ Anstruther considered her to be 'to all intents and purposes a nun' and believed that she had 'taken the vows of religion privately'.⁸⁸ At the time of Anne's suit, then, she was not anticipating courtship or marriage, but she was demonstrably in financial need.

The money for the Vaux daughters' portions was supposed to have come from the 'rentes and profyttes of the Landes and Tenementes of the yeerely valewe of £100 att the leste which were assumed by [Vaux] for 15 yeeres to begin on the 12th yeere of her Majesty's raigne [1569/70]'.⁸⁹ According to Tresham's instructions to his counsel, the agreement had been made in 13 Elizabeth (1570/71) as part of the settlement of the Vaux barony 'for the behoofe of other his Lordships children which he had by his first wife'.⁹⁰ The deed also gave the children's maternal grandmother, Elizabeth Beaumont, custody of them for a period of ten years. The children's maternal uncles, Henry and Francis Beaumont — both lawyers — were 'speciall actors' for Vaux's son and heir Henry.⁹¹ A conveyance limited £100 per annum to Tresham for a period of 15 years so that a sum of £1500 could be divided equally between the three daughters. In Tresham's telling, 'relying vppon the vndoubted validitie of that assuraunce', he had then become bound with his brother-in-law Sir William Catesby to Beaumont '& others' to pay £500 to each daughter 'at suche daies, and tymes, and vppon suche sondrie Contingentes as particularlye appeareth in the defezaunce of the saied Statute', that is to say, at their marriage or their father's death. Tresham alleged that Beaumont had arranged for another deed, 'which Master Sergeant Beawmont &

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 183-95; Nicholls, 'Vaux, Anne'. Anne was also hymned in a Jesuit text dedicated to her: Leonard Lessius and Fulvius Androtius, *The Treasure of Vowed Chastity in Secular Persons* (1621), quoted in Lay, *Beyond the Cloister*, 62 n. 17.

⁸⁸ Anstruther, *Vaux*, 191.

⁸⁹ C33/87 A book, fol. 67r, 1 May 1594.

⁹⁰ BL Add. MS 39828, fs. 258r-260v, Sir Tho: Tresames instructions to his learned Councell, at fol. 259r.

⁹¹ See M.R.B., 'BEAUMONT, Henry I (c.1543-85)', *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1558-1603*, ed. P.W. Hasler, online edn: <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1558-1603/member/beaumont-henry-i-1543-85> (accessed 14 October 2020); J.H. Baker, 'Beaumont, Francis', *ODNB*: <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/1870> (accessed 14 October 2020).

others had procured the Lord Vaux to make', to be 'delyuered in and cancelled' following Vaux's marriage to Mary Tresham and without her or Tresham's knowledge. It is implied that there was some sleight of hand here on Beaumont's part.⁹² On the advice of his 'uncle' Justice Weston, a 'prinicipall partie to the great assuraunce', Tresham requested that Beaumont deliver the deed, and though Beaumont 'never denied to delyuer it' was 'from tyme to tyme' so delayed that he never did so, with the result that Tresham 'grewe gellous that some daungerous defect had secretlie escaped in the said tripartite assuraunce'.⁹³ On perusing the books of assurance, Tresham found that the tripartite assurance was indeed 'vtterlie made voyde by not dewe executing of a Prouiso brought in on the behalf of his Lordships Children by his first wife'.⁹⁴ The fifteen-year lease granted to Tresham was thereby void, he argued, so that if Vaux had died, Tresham would have had to pay the £1500 to Vaux's daughters without any warrant, security, or receipt of 'anie farthinge therof again'. While Vaux lived, Tresham could only receive £100 per annum out of Vaux's courtesy.⁹⁵

Anne's lawyers argued that Tresham had received the money, had levied the profits of certain lands intended for Anne's use 'by force of a covaunte', and had reneged on his promise made 'longe synce' to her uncle Francis Beaumont that the money would be paid to her. Despite this, Tresham had sworn an oath that he could not answer Anne's bill of complaint 'for wante of evidences which he supposed to be in the country'.⁹⁶ In each hearing, the respective parties' lawyers debated the same points: Tresham said that he had never received the money, and even if he had done so Anne was not entitled to it because she was not promised to any prospective husband and her father was still alive. Echoing Sir John Roper's complaints about Tresham's involvement in Vaux affairs, the Beaumonts countered that Tresham had used the money for his own fraudulent purposes: 'that the defendant hath levied the whole porcion or might have levied yt before this tyme owt of certeyne Landes and Tenementes of the said Lord Vaux which were conveyed or Leassed to the defendant in truste' for the marriage portions.⁹⁷

⁹² BL Add. MS 39828, fol. 259r.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, though Tresham uses 'uncle', it has not been possible to trace the familial connection between Tresham and Weston. Weston is probably Richard Weston of Lichfield, who matriculated at the Inner Temple in 1582, but this would make him considerably younger than Tresham: *Inner Temple Admissions Registers, 1547-1920*, <http://www.innertemplearchives.org.uk/detail.asp?id=1394> (accessed 30 April 2021).

⁹⁴ BL Add. MS 39828, fol. 259v.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ C33/85 A book, fol. 713r, 4 February 1594.

⁹⁷ C33/87 A book, fols. 231v-232r, 10 June 1594.

Moreover, they argued, Anne

ys nowe of 30 yeeres of age and for want of her porcion can not be preferred to a competent marriage nor yet maynteyne her self accordinge to her callinge and further that yt is not to be presumed that the plaintiff's said father ever meant that the defendant should haue the vse of the £500 and that the plaintiff should haue noe benefytt thereby vnles she married.⁹⁸

The court had ordered that Tresham bring the portion to the usher of the court as early as 13 May, the final day of the Easter Term. Tresham's counsel had successfully delayed matters seven times over the course of the following five months. On each occasion, the court attempted to execute an order of 19 June for Tresham to pay Anne the sum of £500. Tresham's counsel were granted several stays of execution while they tried, in vain, to show sufficient cause why Tresham should not hand over the money: 'the assuraunce made for the Levyinge of the sayd money ys not good in Lawe'; 'the said £500 ys not payable to the plaintiff vntill she be married', and that if Anne died before marriage the money was to be returned to her father. Anne's counsel argued that Vaux 'ys well pleased that the said £500 shalbe payed to the plaintiff'.⁹⁹ They subsequently argued that Anne was entitled to the money 'notwithstandinge she ys not yet married and notwithstandinge also that the same money was appoynted to be payed at her maryage' because this was superseded by Tresham's alleged financial impropriety.¹⁰⁰

Language matters, and in litigation the wording of legal documents carries immense weight. Tresham's insistence that Anne's portion '[wa]s assigned her for her preferment in marriage, and not for her maynteynaunce' failed to convince the court, which finally found in Anne's favour on 6 November.¹⁰¹ She was to be given the money, but it was to be held 'with such good secuertes as this cowrt shall allowe', in accordance with the order of 19 June, so that the sum could be repaid if Anne should die unmarried.¹⁰² Measures were also put in place to address Tresham's claims. On receipt of the money, Anne was to enter into a bond with Francis Beaumont and Robert Brooksby (her sister Eleanor's father-in-law).¹⁰³ Beaumont was to bring the original statute in which Tresham and Catesby stood bound to him to pay Anne's

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. 127v, 13 May 1594. If Vaux was deposed the record does not survive.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 231v, 10 June 1594.

¹⁰¹ BL Add. MS 39828, fols. 258r-260v, Tresham's instructions to his learned counsel, Easter Term 1594; *ibid.*, fols. 275r-278v, Objections of Anne Vaux, November 1594, at fol. 275r; Anstruther, *Vaux*, 191.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, fol. 308r, 19 June 1594. Anne did die unmarried, in around 1637, but it has not been possible to disentangle the fate of the money. The principal actors had died, and it may simply have been forgotten about.

¹⁰³ *The Visitation of the County of Leicester in the Year 1619 taken by William Camden, Clarenceux King of Arms*, ed. John Fetherston (London: Harleian Society, 1870), 49.

portion, and then to demonstrate why that statute should not be delivered to Tresham; Tresham was then to ‘haue the ayd of this cowrt for the recovery of all such rentes out of the Bayliefes & tenantes handes and owt of the handes of any other person or persons yf anye suche leas should haue gone towardes the payment of the said porcion and are yet deteyned’.¹⁰⁴ The court accepted Tresham’s motion that Anne should demonstrate in writing her father’s consent for her to receive her portion.

Finally, the court made some attempt to disperse the tension between the two families, by asking Anne to ‘repayre to the defendant and in such frendly sort as shalbe convenyent for a gentlewoman of her degree and byrth desure his good will and move the said Lord Vaux her father in any such reasonable request as the defendant would haue her move him vnto’.¹⁰⁵ On 22 October, Tresham was ordered to deliver £500 in full by All Soul’s day, but this was modified on 6 November so that he could pay it in three instalments: £200 by 26 November at the Chapel of the Rolls in Chancery Lane; £100 or more by 10 February 1595, and the remaining £200 by Ascension Day.¹⁰⁶ According to a letter to his wife, Tresham paid Anne in full on 24 November 1594: the sum of £300, together with a choice of two bonds out of three, each worth £100 and from esteemed and reliable men, ‘the meanest of them of much more credit than himselfe’. He noted balefully that he was thereby paying her fully and ahead of time.¹⁰⁷

A number of features of this case are interesting. The legal foundation — an unmarried woman suing for custody of her marriage portion — was unusual. Marriage portions and jointures were the subject of 52% of cases in Chancery by the mid-sixteenth century, but women were not supposed to have custody of their own portions, which were to be paid directly to their husbands by their fathers or male guardians.¹⁰⁸ The number of female litigants increased in the second half of the sixteenth century, and as a *femme sole* Anne was entitled to a greater degree of legal independence, but suits in Chancery were nonetheless initiated by women in just 17% of cases.¹⁰⁹ That

¹⁰⁴ C33/87 A book, fol. 421v, 22 October 1594.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, fols. 421v-422r, 22 October 1594.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, fol. 421v, 22 October 1594; fol. 541r. 6 November 1594.

¹⁰⁷ BL Add. MS 39828, fols. 273r-274r, Tresham to Lady Tresham, 23 November 1594, at fol. 274r.

¹⁰⁸ Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 23.

¹⁰⁹ Erickson, *Women and Property*, 114-15. Amy Froide defined a single woman as ‘an adult woman who has never been married (although she might later marry)’ and asserted that single women and widows both had the legal status of *femme sole*: Amy Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 8, 28. At thirty, Anne Vaux was unmistakably an adult. Other scholars also agree that single women had the status of *femme sole*: Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998). See also Christine Peters, ‘Single Women in Early Modern England: Attitudes and Expectations’, *Continuity and Change* 12/3 (1997): 325-45.

the case would prove complex was a feature of marriage settlement litigation.¹¹⁰ As will be seen in examples below, Tresham's letters to his wife evinced profound sadness and equally potent anger, a characteristic of family law.¹¹¹

Tresham's letters to his wife from the month of November 1594 give a full account, through his eyes, of the meetings that took place between him and his niece in order to try to resolve things. He condemned Anne above all for eschewing charity, the pervasive social and religious impulse that had been, since the Church's inception and lately reaffirmed by the Council of Trent, 'as the love that bound man to God and to his neighbours within the mystical body of Christ that was the church'.¹¹² Despite her own Catholicism, and her avowed support for the English mission, Anne's lawyers used her natal sister Elizabeth's vocation against Tresham in court, playing on anti-Catholic tropes to ensure that Tresham did not win the court's sympathy. It was not within the remit of the entry books of decrees and orders to minute the kinds of slights exchanged between parties, but in a letter of 16 October Tresham told his wife that Anne's lawyers had accused him of having 'procured the Second Sister to be a *Nonne* and thereby deceyued her of Three hundred poundes: Vnder colour of religion abused her to gayne her portion to his owne vse'.¹¹³ According to Tresham, the lawyers had defamed him as 'a Scandale to the Cath[olic] religion, and to all Catholikes; and should also speedelie bee, skowred vpp for yt by them, that had auctoritie to doe yt; and should doe ytt'.¹¹⁴ We cannot know whether the lawyers did in fact use this highly-charged religious language in court, and how much Tresham's ire had given him occasion to exaggerate, but the indications for a *rapprochement* between uncle and niece were nonetheless dire. The hypocrisy of one Catholic accusing another of Catholicism in court was not lost on Tresham, whose bitterness was yet unabated in 1599, when he referred to Anne with caustic sarcasm: 'Behold the charytable proecdyng of thes vertuus ^{and} catholique zealus catholike mayden.'¹¹⁵

Fractures between family members sent seismic waves beyond the original dispute. Seven years after Tresham's death, in 1612, Anne

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

¹¹¹ Though outside of the scope of this article, such responses may also be explored from the perspective of the history of emotions. See Katie Barclay, *Caritas: Neighbourly Love and the Early Modern Self* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

¹¹² Lucy Wooding, 'Charity, Community and Reformation Propaganda', *Reformation 2* (2006), 131-69, quotation at 133; see also John Bossy, *Peace in the Post-Reformation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), esp. 87-88.

¹¹³ BL Add. MS 39828, fols. 277r-278r, Tresham to Lady Tresham enclosed with a letter dated 23 November 1594, at fol. 278r.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, fols. 275r-278v, at fol. 277r, Tresham to Lady Tresham, 16 October 1594.

¹¹⁵ BL Add. MS 39829, fols. 9r-14v, at fol. 11v.

Vaux and Eleanor Brooksby brought a debt case against his widow (as administratrix) in the Common Pleas in their capacity as administratrices of their brother Henry. They were seeking payment of £600, allegedly promised by Tresham to Henry in 1583. Several other debts were mentioned — to John Brudenell, John Moore, Anne Offeley, and John Ireland — but neither Anne's marriage portion, nor those of her sisters, is mentioned.¹¹⁶ Seemingly, the matter of Anne's marriage portion was closed, but the bonds between her, her siblings from Vaux's first marriage, and the older Treshams had been irreperably severed. The wider links between the families, however, were sufficiently well-established to survive. Susan Cogan has demonstrated that Tresham and Vaux cousins sustained a friendly relationship beyond the inter-generational fracture, and the widowed Mary Vaux and her children likewise remained in close contact with the Tresham parents.¹¹⁷ Unfortunately, however, one of Mary Vaux's children, Muriel, was at the heart of yet another episode of Vaux-Tresham acrimony.

III: Muriel Vaux and George Fulshurst

The legal wrangling and importunate match-making that had pitted Tresham and his Vaux nieces and nephews against each other outlived both Vaux parents. A year after the conclusion of Anne's suit, her father lay dying. In his final days, Vaux made further changes to his will: a codicil annexed on 18 August 1595, following George Vaux's death, indicated some disagreement in the interpretation of the original will.¹¹⁸ Vaux therefore commanded his executors to 'receave' the original sum of £400 from the executors of George's will.¹¹⁹ The remainder of the codicil made provision for Vaux's wife Mary and for their sons George and Ambrose and their children. Money owed by Sir Thomas Cecil from Vaux's lands was to be recovered and used to give 100 marks to Ambrose. Further grants of a lease and lands were made to Vaux's wife Mary for use during her lifetime and to her executors until 31 October following her death. After that point, they were to be put to the use determined by articles between Vaux, his son George, and George's father-in-law Sir John Roper, or to George's legitimate male heir if he was not yet twenty-one.¹²⁰ Similar arrangements were to be used to the benefit of George's younger children during his heir's minority. In the event that one of Vaux's executors refused to act or

¹¹⁶ Sir Edward Coke, *The reports of Sir Edvard Coke, Kt., late Lord Chief-Justice of England* (London, 1658), 897-900, online: <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2264211001?accountid=13042> (accessed 9 October 2020).

¹¹⁷ Cogan, *Catholic Social Networks*, 117-19.

¹¹⁸ TNA PROB 11/88/344, fols. 271r-272r.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, fol. 271v.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, fol. 271v.

died within three months of Vaux's death, his wife Mary was to be his sole executrix.¹²¹ Mary died in September 1597, and was buried beside her husband.

With the passing of the elder Vaux generation, Tresham's nieces and nephews landed further blows against family unity. Vaux's youngest daughter Muriel married George Fulshurst, a Tresham servant, instead of her intended, the wealthy Catholic Master Lovell, just before the death of her mother; Tresham believed that the strain had hastened his sister's last illness. Muriel shared her aunt Tresham's somewhat unusual name, which makes it likely that she was her goddaughter.¹²² The scandalous match between godchild and servant became subsumed into both the preceding episodes discussed in this article: Tresham withheld the final part of Muriel's marriage portion, and was imprisoned in the Fleet in the summer of 1599, his final internment.

For Tresham, the three episodes were linked by the involvement of Elizabeth Vaux née Roper, whose influence he blamed for his young relations' abnegation of charity. Like Ambrose, Muriel, 'the vnfortunate wyfe to fullciss', emerged as a pawn in the action against Tresham over her marriage portion, and she too was subject to the will of Elizabeth 'and her confederates', who 'had ^{synisterly} plotted to have defeated my sayd neece [Muriel] of the ^{wholl} -700-li'.¹²³ While Muriel's case against Tresham was financially-motivated, and exacerbated by his former servant's infamous betrayal, it also had roots in the conflict between the children of Vaux's respective marriages. Tresham implied that Muriel's generous marriage portion, enlarged from £500 to some £1700 at his urging, had provoked the envy of her half-sisters and the widow of her half-brother. But like her half-siblings, Muriel met Tresham's 'moore then kynsemanly care, in thus frendyng and advancing her' with 'a most monstuous malice'.¹²⁴ Tresham responded to Muriel's wayward marriage with his servant Fulshurst — 'that arrant verlett of myne' — by refusing to acknowledge the match or to 'shake handes with her' but, more injuriously, withheld the final £750 of her marriage portion. He did so, he claimed, to protect her, the sum having been 'spetially lefft in my custodye, by her, by fullcis [Fulshurst], and by her mother consentt to bee reserued for her, and her children, in respect fullciss hade not of his owne wherwith els to mayntayne her, shold he dye, or shold he abandon her, and marry ane other wyf'.¹²⁵ Tresham believed in the likelihood of such a distressing outcome, 'as he [Fulshurst] legully may doo by way of that aforementioned formall precontracte with master Lovell: as in regarde of his

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, fol. 272r.

¹²² This is also observed in Cogan, *Catholic Social Networks*, 111.

¹²³ BL Add. MS 39829, fols. 9r-14v, fol. 13r.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, fol. 13v.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*

vntruystyness: they having allreddy wasted and misspentt the sayd - 1200-li so by them receued'.¹²⁶

The celebrated friendship between Vaux and Tresham was to be the final episode in a tradition of close kinship that had had begun in the mid-fifteenth century. Yet by 1599, Tresham was writing of other Vauxes in wholly different terms: 'colde I marvell, then mervell might I, how catholikk chrystian earrs cane bee inclinably open to trecherers, arrantest trecherers to mee. qui semel malus semper presumitur malus in eodem genere mali [someone who is once evil is presumed to be always evil]'.¹²⁷ Tresham understood the eruption of family politics into the law courts as a grievance that had arisen following the marriage of George Vaux and Elizabeth Roper and had then drawn in other members of the rising generation, Anne, Eleanor, and their half-siblings Ambrose and Muriel: 'whence came thes sutes so attempted agaynst mee? All onely forth of that howse, which ys most beholden to mee of any whosoever. My meanyng ys, forth of the Lord Vaux his house: prosecuted by -2- of his daughters, and by his sonn^s wyfe the now wydow vaux'.¹²⁸

This article has chronicled three unedifying episodes in the lives of two prominent Catholic families. In each case, temporal concerns came to supersede religious imperatives; family priorities eclipsed religio-political context. This should not be surprising: of course individuals should have looked first to their immediate circumstances, their families and their friends, before considering bigger questions. Squabbles between a younger generation and an overbearing uncle can seem historically insignificant, and yet, the case studies explored here have demonstrated something important: that the steadfastness and piety of prominent English Catholics who sacrificed so much for their consciences did not eclipse mundane preoccupations. Catholic kin relied on each other to sustain a sense of community amid persecution, but they were still susceptible to the causes of unhappiness that affected families across the confessional spectrum. While it could not intervene in an individual's relationship with God, a preoccupation with lineage and stewardship of the family and its estate — itself a religious impulse — could cause irreparable damage to relationships between believers, even within a persecuted minority.

Tresham wrote that the weight of anti-Catholic legislation was less onerous than the eschewal of charity by his Vaux kin. Though we lack similar private testimony from Elizabeth, Ambrose, George, Muriel,

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ BL Add. MS 39829, fols. 9r-14v, at fol. 10r; translation from *Tudor Church Reform: the Henrician Canons of 1535 and the 'Reformatio Legum Ecclesiasticarum'*, ed. Gerald Bray, Church of England Record Society, 8 (Woodbridge and Rochester, NY: Boydell & Brewer, 2000).

¹²⁸ BL Add. MS 39829, fols. 9r-14v, at 11r.

and Anne Vaux, we can still take seriously these fractures. We are accustomed to reading about internicene battles among Catholic clergy, but did these debates loom as large for the Catholic laity in England as they did for polemicists? The experience of the Vaux and Tresham families suggests that they did not. The Vaux family was intimately connected to the English mission, and Tresham was known to the government as a vocal opponent of anti-Catholic measures. But we have seen in Anne Vaux's suit against Tresham that her connections to missionary priests seem to have been far less influential than the myriad benefits of having Francis Beaumont, a judge of the Common Pleas, for an uncle. The efforts of both Vaux and Tresham patriarchs to preserve their family names and estates were frustrated within two generations by the combined efforts of their heirs, not their persecutors.