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Lord of My Soul: The Letters of Catalina Micaela, Duchess of Savoy, to Her Husband, Carlo Emanuele I

Abstract
This essay, part of a book-length project on the Infanta Catalina Micaela, Duchess of Savoy, examines Catalina's relationship with her husband and her reaction to assuming political control in the fall of 1588 during Carlo's first major absence from Turin after their marriage.

Keywords
Infanta Catalina Micaela, Duchess of Savoy, Turin, Habsburg Monarchy, King Philip II

Disciplines
European History | History | History of Gender

This book chapter is available at The Cupola: Scholarship at Gettysburg College: https://cupola.gettysburg.edu/histfac/43
Fig. 4.1  *Catalina Micaela, Duchess of Savoy*. Giovanni Caracca. Oil on canvas, 194 x 108 cm. Museo Civico Casa Cavassa, Saluzzo, Italy.
Chapter 4

"Lord of my soul":
The Letters of Catalina Micaela, Duchess of Savoy, to Her Husband, Carlo Emanuele I

Magdalena S. Sánchez

"Lord of my soul. You can imagine how I have been all night and to see myself at
eight in the morning without news from you and without you having come as you
promised. For this reason I am sending this post correo to beg you to inform me
of everything and especially of how you are because until I know, my heart will not
be at peace." With these words the Infanta Catalina Micaela (1567–1597), second
daughter of Philip II of Spain, began a letter to her husband, Duke Carlo Emanuele
I of Savoy, who was away from Turin on a military campaign in the marquisate of
Saluzzo. Catalina continued to write the duke throughout his two-month absence
on this campaign and throughout many of his other absences during their twelve-
year marriage. Filled with similar words of affection and detailing her activities and
concerns, Catalina’s letters provide fascinating insight into the daily life of an élite
woman. For the most part, scholars have overlooked this amazingly rich source,
even though Catalina was not just the consort of an aristocrat, but rather a woman
who also governed Savoy on the many occasions when her husband was away from
Turin. This essay will concentrate on one small part of the correspondence in order
to consider Catalina’s relationship with her husband and her reaction to assuming
political control during his first major absence from Turin after their marriage. Her
letters reveal her very forceful and sometimes impulsive personality, as well as
suggesting a certain degree of frustration at being without her husband and having
to assume political responsibilities in his absence. She seemingly expressed this
frustration only privately to the duke, however, because observers noted that she
governed prudently, diligently, and energetically. The correspondence between
Catalina and Carlo also sheds light on a sixteenth-century élite marriage, which at
least in their case, was intimate, affectionate, and even amorous.

1 "Señor de mi alma. Vos podréis imaginar cual he estado toda esta noche mas de
verme a las ocho de la mañana y no saber vuestras nuevas ni haber venido como me lo
prometisteis por eso despacho este correo para suplicaros mis abándos de todo y mas de como
estás que hasta que este sepa no puedo tener el corazón sosiegoado." ASTO m. 35, fol. 2r,
September 29 (no year given, but letter is from 1588).

2 See the report of the Venetian ambassador, quoted in Merlin, "Etichetta e politica" 323. See also Raviola 1737–47.
Catalina Micaela was the second daughter of Isabel of Valois and Philip II. Born in 1567, she was three days shy of her first birthday when her mother died. She grew up in the company of several formidable Habsburg women: her paternal aunt, Juana of Austria, who founded the monastery known as the Descalzas Reales in Madrid; her father's fourth wife, Ana of Austria; her other paternal aunt, Empress Maria, who lived in Central Europe for much of her life, but returned to Castile in 1582 and resided in the Descalzas Reales. Catalina's closest bonds as a young girl were no doubt to her father, Philip II, and her older sister, Isabel Clara Eugenia (who would later serve as co-ruler of the Netherlands with her husband, Archduke Albert).\textsuperscript{3} Catalina left Spain in 1585 at the age of eighteen to marry Carlo Emanuele, duke of Savoy; she eventually bore him nine children and died after the premature birth of their tenth 1597. At the time of Carlo's marriage to Catalina, Savoy was just beginning to establish itself as an important power in European politics, and welcomed an alliance with the king of Spain.\textsuperscript{4} For Catalina—a king's daughter—marriage to a duke was not necessarily what she had envisioned, but Philip thought the marriage advantageous because of Savoy's

\textsuperscript{3} On Isabel Clara Eugenia, see Wyhe; Villermont; Sánchez, "Sword and Wimple." On Isabel, Archduke Albert, and their court, see Thomas and Duerico, and \textit{El arte en la corte de los arzobispos}.

\textsuperscript{4} Emmanuel Filiberto, Carlo Emanuele's father, moved his court from Chambéry to Turin only in 1563. At the time of Carlo's marriage to Catalina, Turin was in the earliest stage of being transformed into a capital city. On this transformation, see Symcox.
strategic placement close to France and on the Spanish Road to Flanders.\(^5\) Philip found his son-in-law to be anything but pliable; through Catalina, he tried to restrain and control Carlo, but with little success.\(^6\) After his wife’s death, Carlo grew even more independent from Spain; he outlived his wife by thirty-three years, dying of plague in 1630.\(^7\)

The correspondence between Catalina and Carlo is very extensive, covering a nine-year period (1588–1597), and the letters number in the thousands.\(^8\) For this essay I will concentrate on one small part of that correspondence—their holographic letters, particularly Catalina’s, from late September to the end of November 1588 when the duke was besieging the marquisate of Saluzzo, a French enclave about eighty kilometers (fifty miles) south of Turin. In this two-month period, Catalina wrote the duke eighty letters, usually writing twice daily but often three or four times a day.\(^9\) She rarely missed a day, and when we consider that during this time the duke returned overnight to Turin twice and that in early November Catalina spent five days with him in Savignano (during which time they obviously did not correspond), we can see that these eighty letters were written over an even more concentrated period.\(^10\) During these same two months, the duke wrote twenty-four

\(^5\) According to one report, Philip II offered Catalina a bowl of pearls when she was going to embark for Italy. Catalina took only three pearls, saying that those were sufficient for the wife of a duke. This incident suggests that Catalina was initially not entirely happy to marry a duke. See Dánvila y Burguero 739–40; Fórnika 11; Bouza 117, note 274. On the Spanish Road, see Parker, The Army of Flanders 59–70. As Parker explains, “The legal foundation of Savoy’s alliance with Spain was the Treaty of Groenendaal (March 26, 1559) but the lasting entente of the two powers was rooted in Savoy’s desire to acquire French territory (for which Spanish aid was necessary) and in Spain’s need for a military corridor between Milan and Franche-Comté. The estates of the duke of Savoy straddled the Alps and linked the two Spanish dominions perfectly” (60).

\(^6\) See, for example, Letter of Philip II to Catalina, November 26, 1589 in Bouza 170. For the relationship between Philip II and Carlo, see Alladonna 137–90; Parker, Felipe II 931–2.

\(^7\) For a political biography of Carlo Emanuele, see Gal. For a discussion of Carlo Emanuele’s political motivations, see Osborne 19–49. For political factions at Carlo’s court, see Merlin, Tra guerre e tornei 89–119. For Spanish-Savoyard relations, see Rosso 189–94.

\(^8\) Several letters written by Carlo to Catalina in 1587 survive but none from Catalina. Flora Condlnder has counted 2,100 letters from Catalina and about 4,800 from the duke. I have not counted the letters and do not know exactly how Condlnder arrived at her calculations, because Catalina certainly wrote more letters to Carlo than he wrote her. See Condlnder 326.

\(^9\) For example, on September 29 and October 2, 3, and 6, she wrote Carlo three times each of the days. On October 1 she wrote him four times. See ASTO m. 35, fol. 1r–2bis; fol. 3r–6av; fol. 7r–9ar; fol. 10r–12r; fol. 19r–21v.

\(^10\) He visited her on October 4 and 23, each time spending the night with her. See ASTO m. 35, fol. 15r, October 5, 1588 where she describes how difficult it was for her to watch him leave that morning. See ASTO m. 35, fol. 44r, October 25, 1588 where she
letters to Catalina. These letters from 1588 are interesting partially because this was the first time that Carlo left Catalina in charge of the duchy, but also because this is the earliest exchange of letters from the two that we have. This particular epistolary exchange ended with Carlo’s seizure of Saluzzo in November 1588, a conquest which created international consternation and was condemned by all the other major European states, including Spain initially.11

As the above numbers indicate, Catalina wrote the duke constantly, spending a good portion of every day doing so. She often wrote early in the morning, usually as soon as she was dressed, but occasionally while still in bed. Sometimes she wrote a second time in the afternoon when her children were with her playing in the room (as she said on October 6, “The prince and Vitorio are well and are here playing”)12 and she almost always wrote again late in the evening, right before going to bed. She in turn was desperate to receive the duke’s letters, eventually instructing servants to bring them to her even when they arrived in the middle of the night—and noting in her own letters exactly where she was when she received his letters and her despair when none arrived. When a letter did arrive at night, she occasionally slept embracing it.13 Her own letters were uniformly long, several folios back-to-back, usually written in clear handwriting with minimal additions or corrections (seemingly made as she was writing), and giving the impression of not being rewritten or edited.

The correspondence from late September to November 1588 sheds light on this key period when Catalina assumed political control of Savoy. In effect, because of Carlo’s extensive military ventures outside of Turin, Catalina would continue to govern the duchy for much of the rest of her life. By a decree of September 30, 1588, Catalina governed as Carlo’s lieutenant, with authority over “everything that occurred” in his territories, including matters pertaining to justice, finances, offices, and favors. She did not serve as regent, a title usually given to someone who ruled when a ruler was underage or infirm.14 Through the lieutenantcy, Carlo entrusted Catalina with extensive power to oversee and administer his lands. Catalina’s title and authority were very similar to that of seven medieval queens, who also held the title of lieutenant and who governed the Iberian territories of the kingdom of Aragón.15 By appointing their wives as lieutenants and giving them authority to administer their Iberian possessions, Aragonese kings were able to

notes that he left the previous day. Catalina spent November 5–9 (inclusive) with him in Savigliano.

11 On the seizure of Saluzzo, see Gal 133–48; Cano de Gardoqui, passim. For international condemnation, see Rosso 185–7.

12 “El príncipe y Vitorio están muy buenos y aquí jugando.” ASTO n. 35, fol. 21v, October 6, 1588. Catalina and Carlo always referred to their eldest son, Filippo Emanuele, as “el príncipe.” Vitorio Amedeo was their second son.

13 See, for example, ASTO n. 35, fol. 42av, October 22, 1588.

14 See Merlin, “Etichetta e politica” 311–12; Farenfight 37.

manage their far-flung empire.\textsuperscript{16} In a similar fashion, by appointing Catalina as his lieutenant, Carlo was able to be absent from Turin for long periods of time as he engaged in campaigns to expand the borders of his kingdom.\textsuperscript{17}

The letters certainly reveal that in the duke's absence Catalina dealt with official or political business decisively and effectively. For example, she met regularly with councilors, ambassadors, and ministers. She detailed efforts to find wagons and oxen to transport the supplies; she told the duke of soldiers being dispatched and when he might expect them; and she worked to acquire the money necessary to buy supplies.\textsuperscript{18} She also wrote her father as well as the Duke of Terranova, Spanish governor of Milan, in order to gain military support for her husband.\textsuperscript{19} Occasionally she voiced hesitation or uncertainty about specific actions, asking for the duke's approval, but on the whole she confidently took charge. The duke reassured her that he approved of her decisions, even saying that others could not have done better. On one occasion he commented that the letter she had written to the Duke of Terranova was "extremely good."\textsuperscript{20} She also expressed her opinion, even when it meant disagreeing with the duke. For example, displeased with the actions of one of the duke's most trusted military commanders, Andrea Provana di Leyni, she told Carlo that she was of "a very different opinion" from those at the front.\textsuperscript{21} She went on to give her opinion, apologizing for detailing it at length, but explaining that hers (unlike the opinion of those at the front with the duke) was a disinterested, dispassionate view because she was concerned only with serving him and God.\textsuperscript{22} When Leyni retreated from attacking the castle at Revello, she

\textsuperscript{16} Aragonese kings were "absent kings," traveling throughout their Mediterranean possessions, leaving their wives at the royal court in Barcelona to govern in their name. In order to administer their far-flung empire, Aragonese kings of the fourteenth and fifteenth century consistently chose their wives as lieutenants. See Erenfright, especially 33–8.

\textsuperscript{17} Stéphane Gal argues that Carlo's military campaigns (as well of those of Carlo's father, Emanuel Filliberto) can also be understood as defensive campaigns to secure the borders of his vulnerable duchy. See Gal 67–80, 131.

\textsuperscript{18} See, for example, ASTO m. 35, fol. 17r, October 5, 1588; fol. 18r, October 5, 1588.

\textsuperscript{19} For example, see Catalina's letter to the Duke of Terranova, ASTO m. 35, fol. 36r, October 19, 1588. For an analysis of the letters of Catalina to Philip II, see Rió Barredo and Sánchez.

\textsuperscript{20} "Está en extremo de bien." See ASTO m. 12, fol. 253r, November 14, 1588, where in addition to saying that her letter to Terranova was very good, the duke says that even Carlo Pallavicino, Catalina's mayoromo mayor and close advisor to the duke, could not have done better. In a letter from March 28, 1588—outside the chronological parameters of this essay—the duke told Catalina that she should not ask his pardon for how she had negotiated a particular issue because he himself could not have negotiated as well. See AST, M12, fol. 234bv.

\textsuperscript{21} "Yo tengo tan diferente parecer de los de Sly." ASTO m. 35, fol. 13r, October 13, 1588. This letter was dated by the archive as October 3, but from its content, I think it is actually from October 13.

\textsuperscript{22} ASTO m. 35, fol. 13a.
vocently denounced his actions, writing that Leyni had shown lack of spirit [ánimo] and adding that she would like to have been in his place because even though she was a woman, she would have shown more spirit. As she explained, "It grieves me that Monsieur de Leyni has wished to reveal [how] little spirit [he has]; I wish I were in his place because, although a woman, I would have more [spirit]."23 On this occasion she prefaced her comments by asking the duke to forgive her for expressing her opinion and for giving him advice, but then went on to speak her mind clearly.

Catalina occasionally demonstrated frustration with her political duties. Faced with infighting and constant complaints among councilors for precedence in a newly formed council, she said to the duke, "I beg you to relieve me of this work [trabajo] because without you here nothing is done correctly; at least when I am with you I don't have to see to anything."24 Catalina's comments suggest that when the duke was in Turin, she did not have to deal with councilors and political decisions, and that she preferred not to handle these matters. On another occasion she complained that after spending hours signing official documents [síntarea]—which she added was one of the greatest favors she did for Carlo—she had eaten alone with "las viejas" (the old women), and begged the duke to free her of these burdens.25 By viejas, Catalina was probably referring to the older ladies of her household, who accompanied her at meals, on certain outings, or at night. Catalina's remarks about having to eat with the viejas and sign papers indicate her annoyance with official responsibilities and boredom with court life without the duke. Far from being a feminine ploy to placate male anxiety about a woman in power (after all, Carlo had appointed her lieutenant and trusted her fully), Catalina's complaints reveal that she genuinely wanted Carlo in Turin, governing the duchy and freeing her of the responsibilities and burdens of the lieutenancy.

While Catalina's letters certainly could be used to analyze her political or official roles, they also document her affectionate relationship with Carlo.26 Catalina missed the duke dreadfully; she referred constantly to her solitude [soledad], especially her solitude in bed. For example, she wrote the duke that she had "dined at 7 and now I have prayed and I will go to bed shortly and with so much solitude in everything and in bed," noting also that the duke had been

23 "A mí me pesa que ya haya querido M de Leyni descubrir su poco ánimo; yo quisiera estar en su lugar que aunque mujer tuviera más." ASTO m. 35, fol. 30av, October 13, 1588.
24 "Suplico os que me saques de este trabajo que no estando vos aquí nada se hace bien a lo menos no estando yo con vos que no tendré que ver en nada." ASTO m. 35, fol. 51ar, October 28, 1588.
25 "Suplico os no me dejeis mucho en este trabajo pues es tener dos penitencias estando sin vos." ASTO m. 35, fol. 21v, October 6, 1588.
26 On Catalina's political duties, see Merlin, "Etichetta e politica" 311–38 and "Caterina d'Ausburgo" 209–34.
gone one month, though it seemed a hundred thousand years. 

A month later she wrote him: "So as not to detain Loysa [the bearer of the letter, García de Loysa, guarda dama and servant of Catalina's camarera mayor, Doña Sancha de Guzmán] I have not wanted to get dressed before writing you and I write this one to remind you of your promise to see me tomorrow and take me there [to Revello, where the duke was] shortly because if this is not so, I will die of solitude such as I had yesterday and tonight, not having my life [i.e. the duke] in bed, which cost me many tears." She often told Carlo that she spent the night crying, thinking of him, and in turn the duke told her that he also cried and missed her. As Carlo wrote her on November 12, 1588, no doubt in response to her many references to how much she missed him: "I have much greater solitude than you and no fewer tears at night; goodbye my life and remember that no one loves you more than I." 

In early October 1588, Catalina responded to Carlo after she had finally heard from him after eight days without receiving a letter. She told Carlo that she had feared he had forgotten her, but then had received a letter from him expressing similar fears that she would forget him. Analyzing their mutual anxiety she concluded, "all this comes from loving each other so much." We might question the sincerity of these effusive references to solitude and tears, as well as their calling each other "mi vida" [my life] or "mi alma" [my soul] within the body of a letter and beginning each letter with such terms as señor/señora de mis ojos [lord/lady of my eyes] or señor/señora de mi alma [lord/lady of my soul]. Although these may have been conventional ways of referring to a loved one and describing absence from a spouse, taken in conjunction with other aspects of Catalina's and the duke's letters, they indicate a relationship that was rooted in daily intimacy and sensual pleasure.

On at least two occasions when she was hoping that the duke would come to spend the night with her, she told him which ladies-in-waiting were sleeping in her bedroom and exactly where they were sleeping. For example, on October 24, 1588, she wrote: "Chichón has also slept in my room and therefore the beds are [arranged] as I have told you and hers is at the foot of my bed and Doña Beatriz's bed is by the door [puerta del reterre] and that of Doña Mariana is by the two windows. I want to tell you everything because of what you ordered me to do but

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27 "Cené a las siete hora he rezado y me acostaré luego y con tanta soledad en todo y en la cama de mi vida que no lo podré pasar tanto y más que es cumplido un mes que andáis fuera de aquí que aunque no os parezca tanto para mí son cien mil años." ASTO m. 35, fol. 50v, October 28, 1588.

28 "Por no detener a Loysa no he querido vestírme antes de escribirles y hago esta para acordaros la promesa de verme mañana y llevarme luego que sino es ansi yo me morirá según la soledad que me quedó ayer y he tenido esta noche no hallando a mi vida en la cama que me costa hartas lagrimas." ASTO m. 35, fol. 64r, November 20, 1588.

29 "[M]uch más soledad tengo que vos y no menos hago yo mis ojos en llorar la noche adios mi vida y acordar que no hay ninguno que os quiera más que yo." ASTO m. 12, fol. 252, November 12, 1588.

30 "[T]odo es de querernos tanto ..." ASTO m. 35, fol. 29r, October 12, 1588.
also in case you surprise me, you will know how everything is.31 Two days later when "Chicha" was sick, Catalina reported the temporary personnel changes in her bedroom, noting that Doña Mariana de Tursis was now sleeping in the bedroom so that Catalina would not be without a "vieja" or older woman, and she reassured the duke that Mariana was the healthiest of all. These remarks indicate not only that Catalina was providing the duke with specifics about sleeping arrangements in case he paid her an unexpected nocturnal visit, but also that the duke wanted older—perhaps more trustworthy—women guarding Catalina's bedroom at night. Catalina was seemingly trying to conform to the rules [etiquetas] governing her household, rules which Philip II had given her in Spain and which required that specific ladies-in-waiting sleep in the infanta's room when the duke was not there.32 (These rules had been developed for the household of Philip II's fourth wife, Anna of Austria, and were designed to restrict access to the queen and her female attendants in order to safeguard their honor and reputation.)33 In this case, however, Catalina's comments suggest that Carlo was the one asking her to conform to the rules.

Catalina in fact seems initially to have had trouble abiding by some aspects of Spanish court etiquette.34 In 1586, soon after her arrival in Turin, Cristóbal de Bricceño, one of her mayordomos [stewards] who traveled with her from Spain to Turin, complained (among other things) that Catalina showed no distinction between her ladies-in-waiting and the women of the cámara, who were beneath them in the hierarchy of the court and therefore not allowed the same privileges. Bricceño was horrified by the infanta's failure to maintain these distinctions, her apparent disregard for her ladies-in-waiting, and her lack of concern with maintaining public decorum. For example, Bricceño complained that Catalina and the duke went off by themselves to Mirafiori (their palace outside Turin) without any of the infanta's female attendants, which would suggest to an onlooker that

31 "Chicha ha dormido también en mi aposento y así que se le da cuenta a la dicha doña Mariana entre las dos ventanas os quiero dar cuenta de todo por lo que me habéis mandado y también porque si en vos a tomarse de sobresalto sepa cómo está todo." ASTO n. 35, fol. 44v, October 24, 1588. Chicha was one of Catalina's ladies-in-waiting.

32 For the codification of these rules of etiquette that Catalina took with her to Turin, see Río Barredo, especially 103–12.

33 For these rules, see AGP, Sección Histórica, Caja 49, expediente 3, "Huerdanazas y Etiquetas que el Rey Nuestro Señor Don Philips Segundo Rey de las Españas mando se guardasen por los criados y criadas de la Real Casa de la Reyna Nuestra Señora, dados en treinta uno de diciembre de mil quinientos y setenta y cinco años y refrendadas por su secretario de estado Martín de Gárate." See also Sánchez, "Privacy" 363–9.

34 Although I refer to this court etiquette as "Spanish," the rules that governed the household of Spanish queens combined features of the Castilian as well as the Burgundian models of court etiquette. The rules codified in 1575 for Anna of Austria's household, and that Catalina took with her to Turin, gave pre-eminence to Burgundian elements. See Félix Labrador Arroyo's essay in this volume.
Catalina had "little authority." Briceno worried that others would see a daughter of Philip II in public without the requisite number of attendants. These breaches in court etiquette, according to Briceno, threatened Catalina's honor and reputation, and he did not hesitate to report the problems to Juan de Zúñiga, one of Philip II's closest advisors.

Perhaps with time Catalina and Carlo decided to follow the rules more closely—most probably because such rules enhanced their status, lending a royal quality to their ducal court. Catalina's comments about sleeping arrangements in her apartments certainly indicate that she was following Spanish court etiquette closely. Her letters also demonstrate an awareness of the need to rein in her emotions in public—not something specifically governed by the Spanish rules of etiquette for a queen's household, but rather by her upbringing at the Spanish court, which was known for its formality (Elliott 142–54), as Laura Oliván Santalestra's essay on Isabel of Borbón and her difficulty in adapting to it describes so well. In a letter to the duke from early October 1588, written on the morning when the duke had taken his leave after spending the night with her, Catalina wrote: "when you left I did not know how to say goodbye and since then I have regretted not having hugged you even though everyone was there, and I stayed at the window until I saw you leave in the carriage and I do not know if you saw me." On this occasion, Catalina refrained from showing emotion in front of others, recognizing that this was not seemly for a duchess. Even as her comments reflect her attempts to conform to Spanish etiquette and custom, they also indicate that she and the duke shared an emotional, amorous relationship.

What did Catalina do in the duke's absence? As noted above, she assumed political and official duties, occasionally noting that she had spent time "signing" [firma]rando], but she spent the majority of her day writing letters (mostly to the duke but also to her father and sister in Spain) and attending religious services. These religious services included mass, vespers, completas (compline, or the last hour of the ecclesiastical celebration of the day), confession, and communion. In fact, she told the duke at one point that his long absence was threatening to make her a saint. She also occupied her time with traditionally female activities: she did "red" (intricate mesh needlework); "labor," which suggests other types of sewing or embroidery; and occasionally she sewed something for the duke. For example, the duke seems to have gambled, apparently with dice because Catalina noted that she would love to play, too, though she preferred cards. Catalina sewed a bag for

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35 BPG, CEF, MS 23, Cristóbal de Briceno to Juan de Zúñiga, fol. 439r, June 11, 1586.
36 BPG, CEF, fol. 438–40, see especially fol. 438v–439, June 11, 1586.
37 On Briceno and his complaints, see Fórmica 15–21.
38 "Bien creír que estaba de manera quando os fuiste que no supe despedirme de vos que despre a mi arrepentido de no haberos abrazado aunque estabais allí todos y estuve a la ventana hasta que os viir con el coche mas no sé si me vistes." ASTO m. 35, fol. 15r, October 5, 1588.
39 ASTO m. 35, fol. 4r, October 1, 1588.
his winnings, purposely making it small, perhaps so that he would not gamble as much or perhaps as a joke, indicating that he would never win much.40 She also had others make things that the duke needed or requested. For example, she had cassocks made for the duke to wear in battle, white or red, sometimes with the cross of the order of St. Maurizio; she often commented that they were not as well made as she would have liked.41

Responding to Catalina's frequent references to solitude and tears, Carlo counseled Catalina to get outside more and exercise, though she was reluctant to take his advice and instead protested that she was fine inside.42 Catalina frequently asked the duke to send for her so that she could be with him. She suggested that he was willing to do so but that people within her household—perhaps her mayordomo mayor [lord steward], Carlo Pallavicino—discouraged him from sending for her, again showing some frustration with her household. In this respect, it was a personal triumph when she was finally able to leave Turin to visit the duke in early November 1588. Catalina was four months pregnant with her third child at this time, so perhaps there were reasons for her not to travel. This incident reminds us of the greater limitations placed upon women not only by pregnancy but also by protocol. The duke could come and go as he pleased, though obviously his movements depended upon military necessities; Catalina needed permission, his and seemingly the cooperation of her mayordomo mayor, to travel. The duke could gamble and perhaps carouse (as Catalina suggested in one letter in which she warned him not to act as a common soldier44), but Catalina was primarily on her own with her ladies-in-waiting (especially the "viejitas"), apparently unable to amuse herself with court festivities. Her only form of entertainment during these two months seems to have been visits to her garden and watching soldiers parading through Turin on their way to meet up with the duke.44

Faced with what seemed to her a long separation, Catalina sought other ways to be visible or present to the duke. She sent him portraits of their three sons and one of herself, noting that these portraits were going to "visit" the duke so that he would more easily remember his wife and children.45 "I have wanted to send you this visit," she wrote Carlo, meaning that the portraits were the visitors; the portraits have become animated, taking the place of Catalina and her children, who were unable to make the trip themselves. She commented playfully that her

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40 ASTO m. 35, fol. 25v, October 9, 1588.
41 ASTO m. 35, fol. 11r, October 3, 1588; fol. 25ar, October 9, 1588; fol. 47, October 26, 1588.
42 ASTO m. 35, fol. 39av–39br, October 20, 1588.
43 ASTO m. 35, fol. 6, October 1, 1588.
44 ASTO m. 35, fol. 48v–48ar, October 27, 1588.
45 "He querido enviar esta visita porque os acordéis de los que acá estamos aunque a mí me han mejorado tanto que no me conoceréis." ASTO m. 35, fol. 35vv, October 17, 1588. Perhaps the painting of the three boys was an early version of the portrait done by the school of Giovanni Caracca. See Astria, Bava, and Spantigati 34, figure 10.
own likeness was not very good, but she still hoped that her portrait would remind him of her, and would cause him to return to Turin to see her. When the duke did not soon return, she wrote that she longed to visit him where she could take the place of her portrait. In turn, Catalina kept a portrait of the duke always by her side. She told Carlo that writing him was the best consolation for her in his absence, as well as looking at the portrait of him that she carried with her at all times, even if it did not fully capture the duke's fine expression [tan buen gesto]. These references suggest that Catalina wrote as she looked at Carlo's portrait and that portraits, small enough to be portable, served as visible reminders of loved ones, acquiring almost a life themselves.

When in early November Catalina traveled to Savigliano to meet with the duke, she remained afterwards by herself in the castle while the duke returned to besieging the fortress of Revello. In the castle she not only looked at the duke's portrait while writing to him, but she also positioned herself where she could best hear the artillery fire. She explained to the duke that she had gone upstairs to Dotta Sancha's room because the room afforded the best view of Revello, and though she admitted that the fog (and no doubt the distance of twenty-two km or fourteen miles) prevented her from seeing much, she still felt better, adding that she was no longer bothered by a toothache now that she could see where "her heart" was. From that room, and especially from its corridor, Catalina wrote the duke and spent hours sewing and doing red. This once again indicates her emotional attachment to the duke, her need to be close to him in any way possible.

Catalina and Carlo also exchanged gifts. Carlo sent Catalina flowers and also wrote her poems, encouraging her to write a few verses in return. He sent her tablets [tabletas], seemingly for writing, as well as a necklace. His gifts also included edibles such as gombaros azules [a type of small crawfish] and fruit. The duke also sent her a rosary and she sent him one as well. Catalina also sent Carlo many other gifts: a violet from their garden; a wooden box carved with the names of their children; relics (one of St. Victor sent to Catalina by the nuns of the Descalzas Reales convent in Madrid); a ribbon that she had touched to the Holy Shroud, which she suggested that he wear on the inside of his sleeve, the way she

46 "Que sirva mi retrato de acordaros de mí y de venir." ASTO m. 35, fol. 37v. On the use of portraits as substitutes for their subject, see Bass 21, 79–82, 112, 131.
47 ASTO m. 35, fol. 39r, October 20, 1588.
48 ASTO m. 35, fol. 27r, October 11, 1588.
49 ASTO m. 35, fol. 63v, November 12, 1588.
50 ASTO m. 35, fol. 76r, November 21, 1588.
51 ASTO m. 35, fol. 22r, October 7, 1588. Catalina apparently used these tablets to write on, because in a letter from the previous year, Carlo sent her some of these tablets and joked that they were for her to write her "memorias," now that she "governed the world." ASTO m. 12, fol. 164r, November 2, 1587.
52 ASTO m. 35, fol. 25, October 9, 1588.
53 ASTO m. 35, fol. 2, September 29, 1588.
wore hers; religious icons or images; oranges, melons, artichokes, and preserves, because she knew he loved them. She sent him sashes [bandas] that she had had made for him and occasionally items such as the bag for his gambling winnings that she herself had made. This brief summary does not include other items, such as the cassocks, standards, ointments, or a small clock, which Catalina sent him because the duke had specifically requested them either for his military campaigns or for his personal use. For example, Catalina sent Carlo banners that she had made for him and his men, in colors that the duke chose, and that he returned worn or used to her, apparently so that she would have them repaired or remade. These items were not gifts, but it is clear that Catalina sent him objects regularly.

The literature on early modern gift-giving among the élite has emphasized its reciprocal nature: a gift was given with the expectation that it would be returned in some commensurate fashion. Moreover, gifts exchanged among the élite were intended to win favor, emphasize status, or cement alliances, and were not necessarily indicative of affection or intimacy. Through gift-giving, the European aristocracy developed and maintained a highly elaborate patronage network. The Habsburg women in particular engaged in an extensive exchange of luxury items. These costly goods, transported throughout the early modern world, included exquisitely carved writing desks; tortoise-shell and mother-of-pearl objects from Asia; corals, feathers, gold and silver objects from the New World; bezoar stones; and countless relics. Although we know about these expensive goods exchanged among élite such as the Habsburgs, we still know very little about gifts exchanged between a married élite couple, which makes Catalina's and Carlo's correspondence all the more valuable.

Catalina's and Carlo's letters provide us with a wealth of information about the more mundane gifts exchanged by this married couple who clearly cared greatly for each other. Their relationship, at least at this point in their marriage, when

54 For violet, see ASTO m. 35, fol. 75v, November 21, 1588; for wooden box, see ASTO m. 35, fol. 35r, October 17, 1588; for relic of St. Victor, see ASTO m. 35, fol. 25, October 9, 1588; for ribbon, see ASTO m. 35, fol. 18v–18r, October 5, 1588; for image, artichokes, oranges, and flowers, see ASTO m. 35, fol. 26r, October 10, 1588; for preserves (conserva de citrars), see ASTO m. 35, fol. 27r, October 11, 1588. Catalina wanted to send him almonds, but did not. See ASTO m. 35, fol. 14, October 4, 1588.

55 For bandas, see ASTO m. 35, fol. 4v, October 1, 1588; fol. 12r, October 3, 1588; fol. 17r, October 5, 1588; fol. 35r, October 17, 1588; fol. 41v, October 22, 1588; fol. 77v, November 22, 1588.

56 For cassocks (casaca), see ASTO m. 35, fol. 7v–8, October 2, 1588; fol. 10, October 3, 1588; fol. 25r, October 9, 1588; fol. 47r, October 26, 1588. For standard (estandarte), see ASTO m. 35, fol. 22r, October 7, 1588. For ointment, see ASTO m. 35, fol. 37v, October 19, 1588. For clock, see ASTO m. 35, fol. 17v, October 5, 1588.

57 On gift-giving among the élite, see Kettering, who argues that gift-giving among the aristocracy was a "euphemism for patronage" (131). See also Warwick 633–46. On the social and cultural significance of early modern gift-giving, see Davis.

58 Pérez de Tudela and Jordan Geschwend 1–127.
they had rarely been apart, was grounded in daily contact and their affection was expressed not only in words (letters, poems) but also in material terms—edible delicacies, flowers, portraits—indicating a physical, even sensual side to their marriage. Catalina’s Habsburg relatives also exchanged these less costly gifts. For example, her cousin, Sor Margaret of the Cross, a cloistered nun in the convent of the Descalzas Reales, received numerous edible gifts such as preserves, almonds, cinnamon sticks, and nougat [turrón].

The Habsburgs also exchanged family portraits so as to have visible reminders of their relatives, and Catalina’s sister, Isabel Clara Eugenia, described these portraits as if they were animated, much the way that Catalina spoke of them. Catalina’s and Carlo’s gift exchange, although therefore certainly not unique, still gives us insight into how affection and intimacy were cultivated among spouses and relatives.

Catalina fretted about not being able to take care of Carlo. Regalar was the term she used consistently, the verb form of the noun regalo, which the early modern Castilian lexicographer Sebastián de Covarrubias defined as royal treatment, and regalarse as “to have the delicacies of a king.” Covarrubias described a person who was regalado as “a person who is treated happily and well, particularly with gifts of food.” Thus in the late sixteenth century, the word regalo and its derivatives were closely connected to royalty and to edibles, and when Catalina told Carlo that she wanted to be with him in order to regale him [regalarte], she had in mind being able to spoil him with delicacies and dote on him by providing him with other luxuries. These desires are indicative of the physical warmth of their relationship.

Catalina’s letters from October and November 1588 are filled with (and accompanied by) expressions of affection and support for the duke as he invaded and seized Saluzzo. This seizure tested Catalina’s loyalties, since in taking Saluzzo Carlo was going against Philip II’s instructions not to engage in aggression against France. At that time (1588) Catalina had been married three years to the duke, had given birth to three children, and was pregnant with a fourth (on October 19, she told the duke that she had felt the baby move in her womb). Her letters to the duke make it very clear that her loyalties had shifted from her natal family to Carlo and her children. In her letters to the duke from October and November 1588, she made almost no mention of her father and sister, except to say that she was writing them, often to defend or request military support for the duke’s actions. She worked to gain military and financial assistance for the duke from Philip II’s governor of Milan, the Duke of Terranova, even finding ways to persuade the governor to send


61 “Trato real, y regalar o tener las delicias que los reyes pueden tener .... Regalado, el que se trata con curiosidad y con gusto, especialmente en su comida” (Covarrubias 900).

62 ASTO n. 35, fol. 37v, October 19, 1588.
troops without waiting for specific orders from Philip II. Catalina shared Carlo's dynastic plans, which led him to his numerous military campaigns, and together they tried to secure a royal throne for themselves or their children.44

However, her relationship with Carlo went much further than mutual interest; she also had emotional, affectionate ties to her husband, much more so than to her children, who, though they came to visit her daily, and though she wrote about them regularly to her husband in very endearing terms, she was always willing to leave behind in order to be with the duke. Carlo seems to have welcomed this intimacy, as he said when he was looking forward to Catalina visiting him for several days at Savigliano: "I beg you to come to Sabillon because at least we can relax … and can discuss everything without a thousand spies [overhearing us]."45 Carlo's comments indicate that he greatly valued Catalina's advice and company (and that he distrusted some members of the court in Turin). The letters from October and November 1588 document Catalina's and Carlo's affectionate relationship and illustrate the many ways in which intimacy could be maintained over time and despite distance.

Unlike other early modern Habsburg women, Catalina has left us a mountain of letters chronicling her daily life and marriage. No doubt other Habsburg women wrote regularly to their relatives and perhaps their husbands, but for the most part, their letters have not survived. Catalina seems to have been unusual in forming such an intimate attachment to her husband, and unique in documenting this intimacy. I know of no other case of a royal or aristocratic woman who wrote so frequently and so affectionately to her husband. That Catalina's correspondence with Carlo has survived, stored all these years in the Archivio di Stato in Turin, may itself be evidence of their affectionate marriage. The correspondence is sometimes concerned with Catalina's official duties as Carlo's lieutenant, but the private nature of their letters suggests that they were not meant to be shared with anyone else.46 Each probably kept the other's letters because of their sentimental value—as keepsakes and tokens of affection—giving further proof of the close bonds between the infanta and the duke. Catalina's case suggests that although a dynastic union was arranged for political reasons, it could also be a loving marriage of true minds.

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43 ASTO m. 35, fol. 33, October 15, 1588.

44 After the death of Henry III, Carlo and Catalina tried to gain the French throne. They also hoped that their eldest son would inherit the Spanish throne or that their first daughter would marry a Spanish prince. See, for example, Catalina's letter to Philip II, ASTO m. 36, f. 480, December 29, 1589. See also Carlo's letter to Catalina after the birth of their first daughter, where he considers that she might one day be queen of Spain. ASTO m. 13, fol. 325r, May 1, 1589.

45 "Suplico os que vengáis a Sabillon porque a lo menos podemos holgarnos allí y negociar todo sin mil espías." ASTO m. 12, fol. 248, November 3, 1588.

46 I have so far found only one instance in which Carlo read Catalina's letter to someone else. In this case, he read her letter to the Spanish ambassador in Turin, Don Josepe de Acuña. See AGS, E1266, Deciphered Letter from Don Josepe de Acuña to Philip II, fol. 78, August 12, 1589.
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