

The Experience of Revolution in Stuart Britain and Ireland

Essays for John Morrill

Edited by

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11 'The Great Trappaner of England': Thomas Violet, Jews and crypto-Jews during the English Revolution and at the Restoration

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trappaner (archaic): one who ensnares; an entrapper, decoy, swindler
Oxford English Dictionary

I

On 24 February 1660 one Tobias Knowles – most likely Tobias Knowles (d. 1669), pewterer of St Peter Cornhill, London, and afterwards a common councilman – gave evidence at the London sessions of the peace held in the Old Bailey. Knowles was charged with forging foreign coinage, a less serious offence than counterfeiting coin of the realm, which was a treasonous capital crime. He was to be declared innocent by a jury, but what is interesting for our purposes is that his testimony reveals details of a plot. Although Knowles's evidence cannot be regarded as entirely trustworthy because he sought to avoid implicating himself, a narrative can still be pieced together. In early spring 1659, accompanied by Thomas Violet (1609?–1662), a scheming goldsmith and possibly also his neighbour, Knowles claimed to have gone to 'Dukes-Place' in London's East End. There the pair apparently entered the 'Synagogue of the *Jewes*' where they spoke with 'Mr. Moses their High-Priest' and some other unidentified Jews with whom Violet was apparently 'very conversant'.¹ These details can be substantiated. On 19 December 1656 a hitherto secret Jew of foreign origin called Antonio Carvajal (c. 1596–d. 1659) had, following his emendization, signed a 21-year lease for a brick

tenement on Creechurch Lane in the parish of St Katherine Creechurch. By March 1657 this structure was being converted into a synagogue.² Five years later another curious Christian visitor eager to learn Hebrew was granted admission on the sabbath after presenting a ticket to a porter. He compared the synagogue to a 'high built' chapel large enough to accommodate more than a hundred worshippers. Services were conducted upstairs away from prying eyes at street level, and to gain entry he had to pass through three doors, 'one beyond another'.³ Moreover, Mr Moses can be identified as Rabbi Moses Athias (d. 1666), Carvajal's cousin, who had arrived from Hamburg to lead the congregation.⁴ Violet had previously discussed undisclosed business with these Jews, doubtless connected with choosing the designs of foreign coins. These seem to have been medals to commemorate the accession of Leopold I as Holy Roman Emperor in July 1658. According to Knowles, Violet intended to 'trappan' these Jews, claiming that the Council of State would reward him with half the Jews' assets if he caught them red-handed receiving 'a great quantity' of these unauthorized foreign coins. In other words, Violet – 'a Name too sweet for so foul a Carkass' – had set a trap for the Jews; one which pandered to prejudiced beliefs about Jewish criminality, particularly that Jews were guilty of counterfeiting and clipping coins.⁵

To ensure secrecy Violet allegedly threatened Knowles, saying that he would stab him the next time they met if he disclosed details of the deception. Evidently this did not deter Knowles from giving testimony at the Old Bailey which describes how Violet had instructed him to go to an unnamed tavern. There he would summon the Jews who would receive the newly minted foreign coins, at which point Violet intended to appear on the scene. Before Violet could spring his trap, however, Knowles claimed to have melted down the pieces. Even so, Knowles was still impeached by Richard Pight (c. 1608–*d.* 1673), who, Knowles maintained, had given him permission to cast the coins.⁶ An officer of the Mint (clerk of the irons and surveyor of the melting houses) in the Tower of London since July 1649 when Parliament granted him a patent, Pight reckoned he had been instrumental in discovering, apprehending and prosecuting eighty-six false coiners active across the country between 1650 and 1659.⁷ Moreover, he had filed two indictments against Violet

¹ It is with immense gratitude and deep respect that I offer this essay to my fellow Manchester United supporter, friend and mentor John Morrill. Earlier versions were read at a conference held at Birkbeck, University of London, at the School of Advanced Study and at seminars at the Institute of Historical Research and Trinity College Dublin. I would like to thank the participants for their helpful comments and suggestions. In addition, I have profited from the advice of Mike Bradfield, Mario Caricchio, David Finnegan, Lorenza Gianfrancesco, Tom Leng, Michael Questier, David Smith and Brett Usher, but remain entirely responsible for any mistakes or shortcomings.

² Anon., *The Great Trappaner of England* (1660), pp. 1–3.

³ L. Wolf, 'Crypto-Jews under the Commonwealth', *Transactions of the Jewish Historical Society of England* (hereafter *JHSE*), 1 (1895), 55–88, at 57, 59–60; W. Samuel, 'The first London synagogue of the Resettlement', *JHSE*, 10 (1921–23), 1–147, at 20–1.

⁴ Samuel, 'First London synagogue', 50–7.

⁵ L. Wolf, 'The Jewry of the Restoration, 1660–1664', *JHSE*, 5 (1908), 5–33, at 10–11.

⁶ Anon., *Trappaner*, pp. 1, 3.

⁷ *CJ*, VI, p. 252; *CSPD 1660–61*, p. 10; *TNA*, Mint 1/4, p. 2; E 178/6313; E 178/6589; *HLRO*, HL/POJO/10/1/284–5; *LJ*, XI, pp. 33, 53; William Henry, *Namimata Cromwelliana* (1877), pp. 34, 38–45.

for assault and battery at the London sessions of the peace and was in turn charged by Violet in January 1660 with abetting and assisting the counterfeiting of Dutch, Spanish and other foreign currency. Viewed in this light Violet's stratagem to ensnare the Jews thus appears as a minor aspect of a greater design: namely his attempt to supplant Pight and install himself, with the apparent backing of several members of the Council of State, as the Commonwealth's unofficial searcher and discoverer of false coiners. Exercising this authority would have enabled Violet, notorious for entangling his prey in a web of lies ratified by false testimony, to reap riches.⁸

As we follow Violet, an immigrant's son, from his alleged birth aboard ship – possibly crossing the English Channel – to his painful death, we shall see how his experiences of the Civil Wars, the Revolution and the Restoration enrich our understanding of these momentous events. At the same time the conjunction of shared mercantile interests, social networks and circumstances that partly entwined Violet's story with Carvajal's produces some unexpected parallels; both for different reasons were dissimulators, London inhabitants yet of foreign parentage and with extensive international contacts, on the margins or beyond the pale of 'Englishness'. Here, too, Violet's snares and plots enhance our knowledge of how London's visible Jewish community was perceived, as well as highlighting their undetermined legal status which made them collectively susceptible to extortion.

II

According to the anonymous author of *The Great Trappener of England* (1660), a vitriolic pamphlet almost certainly issued in co-operation with London's Jewish community and attributable to Pight or one of his supporters, Violet was an unrepentant wicked disssembler:

a Common and most Horrid Swearer, a debauch'd Drunkard, especially upon Sabbath days, an Epicure and an abominable Lyer, and guilty of many other enormous and Inhumane Crimes to the great Scandal of our Christian Religion especially amongst the *Jews*.⁹

This 'depraved and degenerating' man was born at sea – 'as though nature had ordained no Country should be burthen'd to own his Nativity, being Ingendred between a poor Dutch Fidler, and a Moorish Woman'.¹⁰ He was the grandson of Rafell Vyoler of Antwerp and the son of Peter

⁸ Thomas Violet, *To Supream Authority* (1660), pp. 2–8.

⁹ Anon., *Trappener*, p. 2. For Thomas Violet see Anita McConnell's entry in the ODNB, although this contains inaccuracies.
¹⁰ Anon., *Trappener*, p. 1.

Vyoler, an Antwerp-born musician who became a London citizen. His maternal grandfather William Dyanmont was from Lucca in Tuscany. Thomas Violet was baptized on 5 December 1609 in the parish of St Mary, Whitechapel.¹¹ He was bound apprentice on 18 January 1622 to Timothy Eman (d. 1638), goldsmith, for the term of ten years and made free of the Goldsmiths' Company on 25 February 1631. He bound his first and only apprentice in July 1631 and was described that year as a goldsmith living in Lombard Street.¹² On 18 May 1632 Violet was summoned before the wardens of the Company and, in an early indication of his vile temperament, charged with calling those who sat in Goldsmiths' Hall 'fooles & knaves'. His relations with the wardens deteriorated further when he was fined for refusing to attend their dinner the following year.¹³

Thereafter Violet was charged in the courts of Star Chamber and Exchequer with a number of offences, including the unauthorized export of gold and silver from the realm. He was imprisoned for several weeks in the Fleet, suffering, by his own account, domestic and foreign business losses before being pardoned in April 1634. In exchange, Violet initiated proceedings in Star Chamber against seventeen other individuals allegedly engaged in the unlicensed transportation of gold and silver. Among them were his former master and Sir John Wollaston, a common councilman who became Prime Warden of the Goldsmiths' Company and lord mayor of London; Wollaston was pardoned by the king on payment of a considerable sum, and would eventually take his revenge against Violet. Producing witnesses from abroad, paying their expenses as well as legal fees, and providing information – sometimes proven false – that led to convictions, Violet hoped to be rewarded with a share of the substantial fines initially totalling £24,100 imposed on his unfortunate victims.¹⁴ Although he claimed to have spent £1,968 prosecuting these cases, Violet was not reimbursed by the crown. Instead, he was given the office for surveying, sealing, assaying and regulating gold and silver wire thread in September 1638.¹⁵ Thereafter, allegedly worshipping

¹¹ Joseph Howard and Joseph Chester, eds., *Visitation of London*, Hantleian Society, 15, 17 (1880–83), II, p. 314; LMA, P 93/MRY 1/1.

¹² Gs. Co., Apprenticeship Book, I, pp. 252, 305; Court Minute Book 'P' part 2, p. 538.

¹³ Walter Pridaux, *Memoirs of Goldsmiths' Company*, 2 vols. (1896), I, pp. 155, 161; Gs. Co., Court Minute Book 'R' part 2, fos. 104r–v, 164v, 205.

¹⁴ *CSPD 1633–34*, p. 576; *CSPD 1636–37*, pp. 267, 402; Pridaux, *Memoirs*, I, pp. 174–5; *CSPD 1637–38*, p. 153; *CSPD 1638–39*, pp. 132, 171–2; *Cf.* I, p. 107; HMC, *Fourth Report*, Appendix, p. 58; Thomas Violet, *Humble Declaration* (1643), pp. 6–16; Violet, *True Narrative* (1653), pp. 63–64; Violet, *True Narrative of Proceedings in Admiralty* (1659), pp. 146–7; Violet, *Appeal to Caesar* (1662), pp. 46, 49–50.

¹⁵ *CSPD 1635–36*, p. 169; *CSPD 1637*, p. 312; *CSPD 1639*, pp. 419–20; Violet, *To the Kings Most Excellent Majesty* (1662), p. 8; Violet, *Two Petitions* (1661), pp. 1–3, 21.

Mammon rather than God, he was said to have enriched himself by impoverishing hundreds of artificers' families.¹⁶

All the same, the guilt of betraying his master (with whom he had lived nine years as an apprentice), fellow merchants and the Goldsmiths' Company weighed dreadfully on Violet. In the last week of his life he recalled that this was the 'first Great Cross' he had endured, and to dispel 'some great lies' determined to provide 'the truth' of this business. Claiming that the earl of Dorset had pressurized him into giving evidence at Star Chamber, Violet resolved 'to die' rather than become an informer. So he swallowed about a dram of mercury mixed in broth. His mother Sarah, however, found the porringer and discoloured silver spoon. Suspecting attempted suicide, she immediately sent for a neighbour, a doctor and an apothecary. With their care Violet recovered after about twenty weeks, attributing his survival to some strange extraordinary providential design.¹⁷

During the Civil War Violet was imprisoned first in Aldersgate Street and then the Marshalsea for refusing to aid the Parliamentarians financially, defaulting on his £70 assessment.¹⁸ Following an exchange of prisoners on 25 December 1643 or thereabouts he became involved with Theophilus Riley, scout-master of the City of London, Colonel Reade, a 'Jesuitical Papist' and fomentor of the Irish Rebellion, and Sir Basil Brooke, a 'notorious Papist', in a '*seditions and Jesuitical Practice and Designe*'. This plot was intended to divide the king's enemies by opening up a channel to negotiate a separate peace between Charles I at Oxford and the City, thereby setting members of London's governing elite eager for settlement against the more bellicose factions within Parliament, as well as alienating Parliament's Scottish allies.¹⁹ On the discovery of the plot in early January 1644 Violet – disparaged as a 'most malignant... *Profeetor*', a 'broken Goldsmith, and a Protestant in shew' – was tried by a Council of War as a spy and committed to the Tower. His estate, consisting of the Essex manors of Bartles Hall in Stapleford Abbots and Peyton Hall in Mannuden, was seized and sequestered, while a debt due to him was assigned to someone else. Violet later maintained that £8,400 of his assets (subsequently revised to £11,000) were plundered. Despite petitioning, he remained imprisoned in the Tower for nearly four years – including 928 days spent in 'a dismal place, little better than a

Duncheon'.²⁰ Once he was able Violet duly memorialized this fact, having it painted over the chimney to his room. Although mocked in a playful verse by fellow Royalist captive Sir Francis Wortley for setting down 'all the dayes' and swearing his 'injuries' were 'scarcely to be numbred', Violet's sense of misery had been so pronounced that 'being somewhat sicke in bodye' he drew up his will on Christmas Eve 1646. This included two bequests – one of £1,000 due upon several bonds, another of a £2,000 debt supposedly owed by the king – to the masters and governors of Christ's Hospital to be distributed as charitable loans to poor scholars.²¹

Following his release, probably during summer 1649, Violet begged Parliament for a pardon and the restoration of his sequestered estate. Lacking a conventional path of advancement through the Goldsmiths' Company's ranks, having supported the losing side in the Civil Wars, conspired with Catholics and with perhaps no other option for preferment, he became a turncoat. Pragmatically presenting himself as '*A true lover of his Countrey*', Violet set about publicizing both his expertise in catching unlicensed exporters of gold and silver ('*An old Deer-stealer is the best keeper of a Parke*'), and his solution for reviving trade – which proposed imitating the United Provinces' mercantile practice.²² Through this strategy he succeeded in obtaining the patronage of John Bradshaw, regicide and first president of the Council of State. Accordingly, Violet was instructed to present his papers to the recently established Council of Trade for their consideration. Published in a book entitled *The Advancement of Merchandize* (February 1651), printed by William Dugard with the Council of State's approval, these included several reasons for setting up free ports in the manner of Amsterdam, Livorno and Genoa, at which foreign merchants would have equal privileges with English natives. Some of Violet's arguments may have influenced Benjamin Worsley, secretary of the Council of Trade, as a few passages – particularly those concerning the decline of shipping passing through Dover and the arrival of immigrant merchant strangers – appear to have been incorporated in abbreviated form in Worsley's pamphlet *Free Ports, the Nature and Necessitie of them Stated* (1652), which was likewise printed by Dugard.²³ Violet's

²⁰ *Cf.* III, pp. 686, 692; *Cf.* VI, p. 550; Thomas Violet, *In the Right Honourable* (1647), hrs.; *Cf.* V, p. 322; Violet, *True Discovery* (1650), pp. 14–15; Violet, *Two Penitons*, pp. 4, 16, 24.

²¹ Francis Wortley, *A Loyal Song* (1647), hrs.; Thomas Violet, *Petition Against the Jews* (1661), p. 31; TNA, Prob 20/2650.

²² Violet, *True Discovery*, title page, pp. 18, 62–3, 90; *CSPD 1650*, pp. 178–82, 292, 431, 454, 455, 473, 480; *CSPD 1651–52*, pp. 24–5.

²³ Thomas Violet, *Advancement of Merchandize* (1651), pp. 1–24; [Benjamin] W[orsley], *Free Ports* (1652), pp. 4, 8; Thomas Leng, *Benjamin Worsley (1618–1677): trade, interest and the spirit in revolutionary England* (Woodbridge, 2008), pp. 64, 68, 73–9.

¹⁶ Anon., *Theopaner*, p. 1.

¹⁷ TNA, Prob 20/2650.

¹⁸ TNA, SP 19/37, fo. 91v; *Cf.* III, pp. 136, 353.

¹⁹ *Cf.* III, p. 358; *Lj*, VI, pp. 369–70; VII, pp. 58, 60; *Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, no. 38 (2–9 January 1644), 289–93; Anon., *A Cunning Plot* (1644), pp. 3–4, 26–32; John Vicars, *Gods arke* (1645), pp. 118–21.

further proposals concerning the East India Company and regulating gold and silver wire thread were also taken into account by Worsley.²⁴ In addition, Violet became associated with the corporation of moneyers in the Mint, who requested his help in rebutting a Frenchman's libels that the gold and silver coins they minted for the Commonwealth were of irregular size, badly designed and easily clipped.²⁵

In December 1652 during the height of the first Anglo-Dutch war three ships, the *Samson*, the *Salvador* and the *St George*, were taken as prize goods near Ostend and brought up the river Thames. Laden with tobacco, wool and silver ultimately valued at £278,250, these vessels, together with several other ships, had seemingly embarked from the free port of Cadiz on 19 October bound for Amsterdam. As exporting plate from Spain without a licence was illegal, it was common practice for factors handling its transportation to protect the freighters' and owners' identities by using fictitious names or not revealing them in documents. Given this ambiguity the Spanish ambassador, Don Alonso de Cárdenas, pressed the Council of State on behalf of Philip IV for the return of what he insisted was rightfully his master's treasure. They in turn referred the matter to the High Court of Admiralty. At this point Violet intervened. Claiming to act on intelligence received from spies at Dover, he persuaded Bradshaw to grant him a warrant with the intention of gathering evidence proving that the *Samson*, the *Salvador* and the *George* sailed under a false flag; that although they professed to be from Hamburg they were actually freighting West Indian silver to enemy territory: the United Provinces.²⁶ Seizure of Dutch vessels or those carrying Dutch goods had been rising steadily for five years, with a corresponding increase in cases brought before Admiralty. Warning that this court, which had recently delivered 'quick judgments in such weighty businesses', was a 'dangerous Back-door' to the Commonwealth if the government did not remain vigilant, Violet urged several leading councillors – one of whom clamoured for continuing hostilities against the Dutch – not to let these prizes slip through the state's fingers.²⁷

Repeating an earlier pattern of behaviour Violet delivered eighty-five witnesses for examination, most of them substantial merchants and their factors, hoping to recoup sizeable legal fees and assorted expenses (he

²⁴ Violet, *Advancement*, pp. 93–7; *CSPD 1651–52*, p. 441.

²⁵ *CSPD 1651*, pp. 231–4, 313–15, 460–1; *CSPD 1651–52*, pp. 23, 156–7; Violet, *Mysteries and Secrets* (1653); Anon., *Answer of Corporation of Moneyers* (1653).

²⁶ *CSPD 1652–53*, pp. 15, 23, 47, 75, 233, 241, 398; Violet, *True Narrative*; Violet, *Proposals humbly presented* (1656), pp. 8–59, 70; Violet, *True Narrative of Proceedings in Admiralty*; BL, Harleian MS 6034, fos. 1v–25v.

²⁷ Violet, *True Narrative*, sigs. a^r-2, b^r, pp. 38–40.

borrowed over £500 at interest, eventually inflating the figure to £1,500 costs) by being rewarded with either the restoration of his sequestered estate or £11,000 in compensation (the revised price he put on his plundered assets). In so doing Violet aroused the enmity of powerful forces: a pro-Dutch faction within the Council, their merchant allies, and agents of Archduke Leopold, governor of the Spanish Netherlands. After the Restoration he even attempted to turn this opposition to his advantage, shamelessly insisting that sowing divisions within Parliament and the Council of State, which supposedly culminated in Cromwell's dissolution of the Rump and Bradshaw's fall from favour, rather than naked self-interest had been his guiding principle all along. Whatever his real motives, the immediate outcome of the prosecution Violet initiated in the High Court of Admiralty was clear: the silver aboard the *Samson*, the *Salvador* and the *George* was unloaded and, according to his later accounts, taken on 29 April 1653 under armed guard to the Tower. There, over the course of almost a year, it was melted, minted and then distributed as coin to the army and navy, pumping huge amounts of money into circulation.²⁸

Another intriguing aspect of this affair was the involvement of Jews and crypto-Jews. Hence, on the instruction of a Portuguese factor at Sanlúcar, the *Samson* was loaded at Cadiz with forty bars of silver that were to be consigned to his brother, 'a Jew dwelling in *Amsterdam*'.²⁹ Moreover, Antonio Carvajal was one of twenty-eight Dover factors for the Dutch merchants named as witnesses by Violet, giving his sworn testimony at Admiralty on 21 November 1653.³⁰ Violet indeed had previously recommended that the Council of State encourage Spanish silver merchants to transport their commodities via an English port such as Plymouth, and that they seek the advice of Carvajal and several other Dover factors in the matter.³¹

III

Carvajal was a major importer of silver from the West Indies and gold from Cadiz, as well as wine from the Canary Islands. He had been born overseas – probably Portugal – later trading mainly from Spain before departing for Rouen. Having lived in Rouen three years he arrived in

²⁸ Violet, *True Narrative of Proceedings in Admiralty*, pp. 2, 15; Violet, *Appeal to Caesar*, pp. 38–45, 53–54; TNA, Prob 20/2650.

²⁹ Violet, *Proposals*, p. 17.

³⁰ Violet, *True Narrative*, p. 38; M. Woolf, 'Foreign trade of London Jews in the seventeenth century', *JHSE*, 24 (1974), 38–58, at 52.

³¹ Violet, *Advancement*, p. 13.

England about 1635. Thereafter Carvajal exported a wide variety of goods including buckram to Corunna; woollens, ornament and whetstones to Rouen; gum to Bilbao; cloth and hats to Dunkirk; looking-glasses, knives, brushes and pewter to Terceira; canvas and hose to Madeira; and calico, taffeta and drugs to Venice.³² He eventually settled in Leadenhall Street in St Katherine Creechurch, but did not attend church and was indicted for recusancy on 19 May 1640.³³ Even so, he contributed to a collection in aid of the Protestants in Ireland as well as paying his assessment.³⁴ On 14 March 1644 Carvajal petitioned the House of Lords on behalf of a Dutch merchant consortium, concerning the shipment of 300 barrels of gunpowder from Amsterdam to Dover that had been intercepted and appropriated for Parliament's use by the earl of Warwick.³⁵ Although Carvajal was prosecuted in the Lords in January 1645 for not going to church he later outwardly practised Catholicism, reportedly attending Mass daily at the residence of the Spanish ambassador, Cárdenas. There he stood godfather to a number of Catholic infants and had several of his own children baptised publicly, even if it seems that he remained 'a Jew in heart', adhering to Jewish law by having his sons circumcized privately at eight days old (Genesis 17:12).³⁶ Along with his two sons Alonso and Joseph, Carvajal was granted an endowment on 31 July 1655 which was subsequently confirmed by a patent.³⁷ This is significant, because Carvajal was to declare his Judaism publicly eight months later, during the investigation of António Rodrigues Robles (c.1620-d.1688).

On 13 March 1656 legal proceedings were begun against Robles, a wealthy merchant of Duke's Place, who was accused of being a Spanish national. As England was then at war with Spain the goods and property of enemy Spaniards were liable for confiscation. Robles countered that he was actually a Portuguese-born Jew from Fundão who had fled to Spain – possibly Seville or Madrid – with his family. There the Inquisition had murdered his father and tortured and crippled his mother. Robles, who at some point was 'cut across the face', escaped to the Canary Islands,

where he changed his name, professed to be a Catholic and worked as a custom house official in the port of Santa Cruz on Tenerife. Depositions by a number of witnesses, including a few Iberian Jews, revealed that Robles, who had been living in England for four or five years, was married to a Portuguese woman of the 'Hebrew nation and Religion' yet had also been seen attending Mass at the Spanish ambassador's house in London until about mid-November 1655. Furthermore, Robles was at that time uncircumcized; apparently after he was circumcized his foreskin was buried in accordance with Jewish custom, but his servant dug it up as a joke – much to Robles's displeasure.³⁸ This business forced other members of London's secret Jewish community out into the open because many either had Spanish origins or had resided there. Accordingly, on 24 March Carvajal and six other men, including Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel (1604–1657), who had arrived in London from Amsterdam the previous September 'to solicit a freedom for his nation to live in England',³⁹ petitioned Oliver Cromwell for permission to practise Judaism privately in their homes, to go about unmolested and to have a burial place outside the City of London. Cromwell referred this petition for consideration to the Council of State, which on 26 June returned it, apparently without recording the details or outcome of their discussion.⁴⁰

Meanwhile evidence continued to be taken in Robles's case, and by mid-May he had his ships, merchandise and other property which had been seized restored to him. Nonetheless, the Admiralty commissioners decided that he was 'either noe Jew or one that walkes under loose principles, very different from others of that profession'.⁴¹ Carvajal for his part was accused by a London merchant of ingratitude and hypocrisy:

[W]hen the War began with *Spain*, then he was neither Spaniard, Portugal, French nor Dutch, Italian nor Turk, but an Hebrew, a plain downright Jew, acknowledging he never was or would be a Christian, taking upon him the outward profession of Christianity only for safety, which now he needed no longer to make use of, being he could live in *England* a professed Jew.⁴²

Depositions taken before inquisition tribunals in Lisbon in March 1659 and on the Canary Islands in March 1660 confirm that Carvajal threw off his disguise when 'the Protector Cromwell had broken the peace with Spain'. Thenceforth it was public knowledge that he adhered to the 'Law of Moses' in London, reportedly 'holding Jewish rites and ceremonies

³² John Paige, *Letters of John Paige*, ed. G. Streckley, London Record Society, 21 (1984), nos. 48, 51, 59, 60, 64, 81, 83, 84, L. Wolf, 'The first English Jew', *JHSE*, 2 (1994–95), 14–46, at 16–18, 26, 45; Wolf, 'Foreign trade', 41–6.

³³ John C. Jefferson, ed., *Middlesex County Records (Old Series)*, III: 1625–1667 (1974), p. 147.

³⁴ TNA, SP 28/193; E 179/147/595; Prob 11/296, fo. 531r–v, pr. in Wolf, 'Crypto-Jews', 86–8.

³⁵ *LJ*, VI, pp. 378, 471; Wolf, 'First English Jew', 17, 24–5.

³⁶ John Bland, *Trade revived* (1659), p. 21; Violet, *Jews*, p. 4; Wolf, 'First English Jew', 16, 27.

³⁷ Thomas Birch, ed., *Collection of State Papers of John Thurloe*, 7 vols. (1742), III, p. 688; Wolf, 'First English Jew', 45–6.

³⁸ Wolf, 'Crypto-Jews', 60–8, 77–86; Lucien Wolf, ed., and trans., *Jews in the Canary Islands* (1926), pp. 178, 202–03, 204, 206–07, 213; E. Samuel, 'Antonio Rodrigues Robles', *JHSE*, 37 (2002), 113–15.

³⁹ SUL, HP 4/3/2A; BL, Add. MS 4365, fo. 277v.

⁴⁰ *CSPD* 1655–56, pp. 237, 294–5, 316; Wolf, 'Crypto-Jews', 66–8, 76; Lucien Wolf, ed., *Memorandum Ben Israel's Mission* (1901), pp. lxxxv–lxxxvi.

⁴¹ Wolf, 'Crypto-Jews', 86. ⁴² Bland, *Trade revived*, p. 21.

in a back room of the house in which he lived' – presumably until the completion of the synagogue on Creechurch Lane.⁴³ Equally noteworthy was Violet's allegation that the 'great Jew' Carvajal had allegedly told him that the Jews planned to advance Cromwell £1,000,000 if he gave two thousand Jewish merchants and their families liberty to settle in England, where they would be endemized.⁴⁴

IV

About Christmas 1659 – just seven weeks after Carvajal's death – Violet outlined a new stratagem for extorting money from the Jews to Sir Thomas Tyrrell, formerly a commissioner of the Great Seal and soon to be a judge in the court of common pleas. Tyrrell, however, advised keeping it secret until the restoration of the monarchy. In June 1660, following King Charles's return from exile and his triumphant entry into London, Violet met Tyrrell again.⁴⁵ On Tyrrell's recommendation, Violet now presented his ploy to the Privy Council. Adopting an expedient alarmist tone and condemning the solemn observance of morning and afternoon services in the London synagogue as a 'great dishonour' and public scandal to the 'true Protestant Religion', Violet warned that 'multitudes of men and women' seeking after novelties in religion had become proselytes to Judaism. For rather than turning Christian, Jews had exploited religious discord to make converts. Furthermore, relying heavily on William Prynne's *A Short Demurrer to the Jewes* (1656) as well as legal records and precedents provided by Tyrrell, Violet denounced Jews as a cursed nation of blasphemous Christ killers, comparing their religious rituals to popish superstitions. He also raised the spectre of international Jewry, xenophobically stressing Carvajal's and his compatriots' Iberian background, censuring Jewish merchants for their cunning underhand tricks, and reproving Jewish tax-gatherers for sucking up wealth like a sponge. Accordingly, Violet proposed ensnaring London's burgeoning Jewish community within the 'Net of the Law', ransoming them to help pay off the national debt, and ultimately banishment.⁴⁶ On the morning of Friday 17 August he petitioned the marquis of Ormond, recently

appointed lord steward of Charles II's household and two other privy councillors, the earl of Southampton and John Lord Robartes, urging them to sign a draft warrant to apprehend the Jews of London and its suburbs – especially those dwelling in Duke's Place. As the Jewish sab-bath was approaching, Violet urgently proposed sending thirty or forty soldiers to seize them at prayer and simultaneously secure their properties, money, jewels, merchandise and account books. With the seeming collusion of Sir Ellis Leighton, a courtier favoured by the duke of York, the Jews would then be transported under armed guard by boat to Chelsea College. Preying on fears of miscegenation, of Jewish seed adulterating Christian blood, as well as child poverty brought about by economic competition, Violet claimed to speak for all English merchants in the City and hoped to be rewarded with a tenth of any ransom if the Jews were not granted royal licence to remain in London.⁴⁷

At the end of November a humble remonstrance concerning the Jews was addressed to the king. Echoing many of Violet's calumnies, giving credence to additional rumours and sharing similarities with his scheme if not writing style, it articulated the grievances of London merchants. Perhaps presented by Sir William Courtney, a member of the Convention Parliament, the remonstrance proposed empowering individuals to make inquiries about the size, behaviour, wealth, habitations and economic activities of the Jewish community.⁴⁸ Two lists of London Jews that have been dated to winter 1660 suggest that some of this information was gathered, almost certainly to facilitate levying a tax, or imposing a fine, the seizure of goods, imprisonment or even banishment, had Charles II been swayed to follow one of these courses.⁴⁹ On 7 December the Privy Council, having read both a petition from the merchants and tradesmen of London calling for the expulsion of the Jews (probably delivered on their behalf by the lord mayor and aldermen of London) and another petition pleading for their continued residence signed by Carvajal's widow Maria and other prominent Jewish merchants, referred the matter on the king's instructions to Parliament. Ten days later the order was presented to the Commons, who postponed discussion 'touching Protection for the Jewes' until the next morning.⁵⁰ Although any possible debate is unrecorded in the journals of the Convention Parliament (dissolved 29 December 1660), Violet was informed of developments by a London merchant, and hastily published *A Petition Against the Jewes*

⁴³ Arquivo Nacional da Torre do Tombo, Inquisição de Lisboa, Cadeimos do Promotor no. 36, fo. 698, printed in *Academia das sciências de Lisboa. Boletim da segunda classe*, 4 (1911), 461–4; Wolf, *Jews in the Canary Islands*, pp. 176–7. I am most grateful to João Melo for locating and translating the former document.

⁴⁴ Violet, *Jewes*, p. 7; Wolf, 'First English Jew', 21. ⁴⁵ Violet, *Jewes*, pp. 7–8.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–7, 8; cf. William Prynne, *Short Demurrer* (1656), pp. 50, 54, 57–8; L. Wolf, 'Status of the Jews in England after the Resettlement', *JYHSE*, 4 (1903), 177–93, at 181; Wolf, 'Jewry of the Restoration', 13.

⁴⁷ Bodl., MS Carte 31, fos. 17, 19.

⁴⁸ *CSPD 1660–61*, p. 366; Wolf, 'Status of Jews', 182, 188–92.

⁴⁹ *BL*, Add. MS 29688, fos. 15, 16, printed in Wolf, 'Jewry of the Restoration', 6–7.

⁵⁰ Wolf, 'Status of Jews', 186–88; *CJ*, VIII, p. 209; Wolf, 'Jewry of the Restoration', 28–9.

(January 1661). This proved, however, to be an ill-judged effort to gain royal and parliamentary favour.

Afterwards Violet, partly through the intercession of a former comrade in the Tower, Sir Lewis Dyve (1599–1669), continued regularly petitioning the king and Parliament with a number of proposals that would have offered him potentially lucrative employment if they came to fruition. These concerned remedying alleged abuses practised by the makers of gold and silver thread, regulating the Mint and customs duty, and enforcing the tariff on gold and silver exported by the East India Company. In May 1661, doubtless in recompense for risking his life serving Charles I and consequently enduring lengthy spells of imprisonment, Violet's model for regulating the customs was taken into consideration. Yet nearly eleven months later naught had transpired, prompting him to reflect bitterly that pinning his hopes on the turning political tide had yielded 'nothing but words'.⁵¹

On Saturday 5 April 1662 Violet orally declared his will, according to one version bequeathing his entire estate to his principal creditor Alexander Holt, goldsmith of Lombard Street, London, to whom Violet owed about £1,000 and without whose assistance he would have 'utterly perished and been undone'. As for his kindred, Violet had 'none that I care for' or who 'of late yeares' had obliged him to provide for them.⁵² Little over a week later Violet journeyed to Windsor intending to persuade the dean and chapter there to grant him a reversion of the lease of lands in Great Haseley, Oxfordshire, belonging to Edmund Lenthal. Despite a purported letter from Charles II attesting to Violet's 'great sufferings and losses' during the Civil War, Violet obtained neither lease nor the £10,030 in compensation that he expected from Lenthal.⁵³ Believing that he had been defrauded, that he was the victim of broken promises, left with debts amounting to almost £2,000 and a number of creditors grasping for money, his debtors either unwilling or unable to pay him, despairing of being flung any moment into a debtors' prison where he would inevitably perish, Violet made 'a Roman Resolution': to die like a Roman and 'so put an end to all worldly troubles'. Consequently, on 16 April 1662, the day after returning home to St Peter Cornhill, London, he decided to 'truly state' his case in order to 'satisfie all the world of some remarkable pasedges of Gods Providence upon him'. Still hoping for a last-minute royal change of heart, yet haunted by the sad temptation

of suicide, Violet contemplated the central events of his relatively long life.⁵⁴

Foremost on his mind, as indeed it had been in many previous petitions, was the letter from Charles I to the lord mayor and aldermen of London dated 26 December 1643 that Violet had brought from Oxford 'when the City was in the height of ther madnes'. Protesting his innocence, unrepentant, aggrieved, blaming Parliament's rage and the fury of some firebrands for his ruin, he consoled himself with the thought that God was the potter fashioning honour and dishonour out of clay vessels, bestowing preferment on Jacob and refusing Esau (Romans 9:13, 21). Next Violet recalled being questioned in Star Chamber in 1634. Invoking God as his witness, he rejected as a malicious falsehood the widespread accusation then current that he had voluntarily betrayed his associates to save himself. Violet's evidence was his attempted suicide and fortunate survival, envisaged as successfully overcoming a form of trial by ordeal through divine favour. There followed his failure to convince Parliament to restore his sequestered estate, which had forced Violet ever since to borrow at irregular intervals huge sums of money from several friends. After that came his involvement in the seizure of the silver cargo in the ships *Samson*, *Salvador* and *George*, together with associated manoeuvring in the High Court of Admiralty. Vowing that borrowing money he could not repay had wounded his soul, Violet then drew up a ledger showing his creditors and debtors. Continually vindicating his conduct, with an eye to his posthumous reputation, Violet's exercise in self-justification becomes thereafter increasingly repetitious and self-pitying, giving a powerful insight into his psychological disintegration. Thinking that he had been slighted and scorned, treated no better than a dog, that it would set a bad precedent if Charles II did not reward his faithful service and 'many sufferings' by seeing all his debts paid, Violet cited his own calamitous condition as a warning to posterity to serve God rather than trust in the promises of princes or great men. For the devil was a cunning sophist able through 'great craft' to make a man defer repentance of his sins. Thus Violet humbly implored Jesus to have mercy upon him, not to leave him alone for even a minute lest he commit the heinous crime of self-murder. But of the Jews whom he had intended to trap, blackmail, ransom and banish there was no mention.⁵⁵

The following day Violet affirmed before witnesses that he hoped that the king would grant his petition.⁵⁶ Then at 1 o'clock on Sunday 20 April

⁵¹ CSPD 1660–61, pp. 271–2; CSPD 1661–62, pp. 12–13, 254; *Calendar Treasury Books 1660–67*, p. 178; Violet, *Two Petitions*; Violet, *Case of Thomas Violet* (no date = 1662);

⁵² Violet, *To the Kings Most Excellent Majesty*; TNA, Prob 20/2650.

⁵³ CSPD 1660–61, p. 249; TNA, Prob 20/2650.

⁵⁴ TNA, Prob 20/2650.

⁵⁵ TNA, Prob 20/2650; Staffordshire RO, Stafford, D(W) 1778/II/104.

⁵⁶ TNA, Prob 36/1.

1662 Violet poisoned himself. This time the consequences were fatal. Yet even in agony he continued writing, begging two qualities from Christ he himself had lacked in life – mercy and forgiveness:

now the pangues of death are on me I ask Christ Iesus forgiveness forgive me
mercie mercie sweet Iesus Pray for me pray for me Interseed for me Iert thy blud
wyp away all my sines this great Cr[y]ing sine.

Thus the 'Great trappaner of England' died by his own hand.⁵⁷

By early May rival claimants to Violet's estate had begun contesting the contents of his nuncupative will. Protracted legal proceedings ensured that the matter remained unresolved until mid-July 1663.⁵⁸ Meanwhile Violet was buried, in fulfilment of his wish, in the parish church of St Katherine Creechurch, possibly in the same vault where his mother and father lay interred.⁵⁹ Evidently the nature of his demise must have been kept secret, since Christian suicides were customarily denied both funeral rites and burial in consecrated ground.⁶⁰ Twenty-nine months earlier the great bell of St Katherine Creechurch had tolled to mark the passing of Antonio Carvajal, who had died on 2 November 1659 after an unsuccessful operation to remove what was most likely a kidney or bladder stone (Samuel Pepys had famously survived a similar procedure performed by the same surgeon). Carvajal was laid to rest in the newly acquired Jewish burial ground at Mile End. The synagogue he had helped to establish in Creechurch Lane opposite the Great Gate leading into Duke's Place was situated no more than one hundred yards from Violet's corpse.⁶¹

V

Notwithstanding the self-serving nature of much of Violet's evidence, his fluctuating fortunes during the English Revolution and at the Restoration are instructive. Indeed, constructing Violet's largely urban-based narrative illuminates not just his disturbed, ruthless character but the ways in which an individual could repeatedly fashion their identity and ostensibly change allegiance according to circumstance. Furthermore, it illustrates an unusual if hazardous route towards influence and prosperity,

⁵⁷ TNA, Prob 20/2650.

⁵⁸ TNA, Prob 20/2650; Prob 36/1; Prob 11/310, fos. 221v–22r.

⁵⁹ TNA, Prob 20/2650.

⁶⁰ Michael Macdonald and Terence Murphy, *Sleepless Souls* (Oxford, 1993), pp. 19–20, 48–9.

⁶¹ Samuel, 'First London synagogue', 7–8, 20–1, 25; W. Samuel, 'Carvajal and Pepys', *JHSE*, 2 (1935), 24–9.

together with affording glimpses of the complex interplay between civic and national politics, competing interest groups striving for control of republican commercial policy, the dilatory way in which Charles II dealt with his father's supporters, and unresolved religious tensions. In short, through Violet we see how someone on the margins of power attempted, with varying degrees of success, to attract patrons both by promoting the advantages of their specialist knowledge and, when necessary, eliciting sympathy through accounts of suffering and professions of constancy.

At a time when, as the work of historians of early modern London and its suburbs reminds us, an idealized sense of parochial community, emphasizing as it did values of neighbourliness, co-operation and charity, competed with the rival attractions of civic pageantry and ritual, guild affiliation and religious sentiment as the pre-eminent social bonds of a parishioner's life, Violet generally positioned himself outside these pivotal intersecting worlds. A London citizen who moved from one parish to another, at odds with his livery company, caring nothing for his kin except his mother and a cousin, rarely calling on his neighbours except when in need, but nonetheless capable of making charitable bequests, he inhabited a civic space we are unaccustomed to observing. Violet therefore alerts us to the more unconventional pathways trodden around the periphery of the City's notional boundaries by neither respectable householders nor vagrants but by something altogether different. Integrating these lives, which sometimes transgressed licit parameters, into our existing grand narratives of early modern London will contribute towards resolving disagreements about the dominant forces – structural stability or inherent tensions – driving the City's rapid transformation, extraordinary growth and governance.

Likewise, Violet's evolving persona manufactured on the one hand publicly through printed treatises, petitions, letters, lobbying and legal testimony, on the other privately through autobiographical recollections in manuscript, raises interesting questions about the nature of the early modern self – especially in the light of Stephen Greenblatt's pioneering study.⁶² Indeed, enough is known about Violet to break down his identity into seven distinct components: ethnicity, nationality, age, gender, social class, political loyalties and religious beliefs. Ethnically Violet was perhaps unusual, as he may have been of mixed race, the progeny of a Caucasian father and perhaps very dark-skinned ('Moorish') mother. Regarding nationality Violet was English, although apparently born at sea. Besides, with a father and paternal grandfather from the Spanish

⁶² Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-fashioning* (Chicago, 1980).

Netherlands, an alleged 'Moorish' mother and Tuscan maternal grandfather, he must be placed at the edge of what constituted 'Englishness'. This acquires added significance when juxtaposed with James Shapiro's suggestion that one of the ways 'Englishness' was being defined during this period was by asserting what it was not, specifically that the notion was evolving at least partly in tandem with changing conceptions of what characteristics defined 'Jewishness'.⁶³ Turning to gender, there is no evidence that Violet married or sired children out of wedlock. All the same, it would be unwise to speculate about his sexual orientation or an off-putting personality disorder, given that marital union was dictated by considerations of 'good liking', status, wealth and religious sentiment rather than love. By contrast, Violet's perception of his standing within English society, together with the weight he placed on financial solvency as a way of retaining personal credit among his social equals and betters, is in keeping with Alexandra Shepard's findings about the links between economic self-sufficiency, honesty, responsibility and early modern concepts of manhood. This is borne out further by Violet's insistence that he had not squandered his money gambling but had earned instead a reputation for honouring his debts.⁶⁴ Again, as Michael MacDonald and Terence Murphy have shown, lost fortunes like Violet's and fear of destitution were a common motive for suicide, the instigation of the devil a formulaic explanation, while Roman precedents – particularly those justified by Stoic and Epicurean philosophy – informed Renaissance humanist and Protestant attitudes towards self-murder.⁶⁵

Although he did not fight in the Civil Wars, Violet's allegiance was initially unquestionably to the king. An unmoderated Marxist interpretation would doubtless view this as Violet acting in accordance with his class interest: affirming his social rank (the family was armigerous), safeguarding his valuable patent from Charles I to regulate gold and silver wire thread. Recently Barbara Donagan has suggested that Royalist allegiance 'seems to have been almost instinctive', emphasizing the strong element of personal loyalty involved as well as the desire of Royalists to uphold existing social norms, hierarchies and institutions. This, too, chimes with Violet's claims after the Restoration that duty required him to serve God, king and country; that Parliament and the City of London had ruptured the divine order by breaking God's laws.⁶⁶ Unfortunately, less is known of Violet's religious beliefs. His enemies

depicted him wearing a mask, as merely an outward Protestant, an ungodly sinner given to swearing, drunkenness, lying, sabbath-breaking, associating with Catholic plotters and other scandalous conduct. Here we see a striking correspondence with polemical representations of certain aspects of Cavalier behaviour. Moreover, Violet's suspected dissimulation resonates with Perez Zagorin's discoveries concerning widespread divergent practices of deception throughout early modern Europe that enabled persecuted believers to hide their inner convictions.⁶⁷ Nevertheless, this image must be qualified by picturing Violet's death-bed plea to Jesus, whom, in an orthodox Protestant manner, Violet envisaged as mediator between God and man, atoning through the righteous shedding of his blood for humanity's sins.

The dissembler in religion had their counterpart with the Machiavel in politics. Here Violet cultivated a deserved reputation for excelling at 'fraud and feigned preferences'. Sir Lewis Dyve attested that he was 'able to put any shape and mould on himself to compass his design', while many members of the Council of State reportedly thought him 'a sly and dangerous fellow', always presenting propositions that might 'bear double interpretations'. An immoral active 'instrument', he lived by 'shifts' and 'projects', tacking his sails in the shifting political winds but still occasionally unable to avoid floundering on the rocks.⁶⁸ Navigating these turbulent vicissitudes, the alterations in civic and national government, Violet's intrigues, lies and insinuations call attention to intricate, partly hidden dynamic personal relationships between agents, clients, patrons, friends and allies operating with varying degrees of cohesion on different scales at the core of political processes. Driven by ambition, avarice and enmity, the most dramatic moment of his early career – the plot to divide the king's enemies – has been integrated into Keith Lindley's account of popular politics and religion in Civil War London.⁶⁹ Similarly, Violet's attempt to ingratiate himself with the republican regime and participate in debates about the direction of its commercial strategy casts extra light on the Byzantine network of changeable alliances examined by James Farnell and Robert Brenner that underpinned the competing factions driving through anti-Dutch policies – notably the Navigation Act of 1651, which arguably precipitated the first Anglo-Dutch war – and anti-Spanish designs such as the expedition to attack the Spanish West Indies.⁷⁰

⁶³ James Shapiro, *Shakespeare and the Jews* (New York, 1996), pp. 4–5, 43–6, 167–93.

⁶⁴ Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 186–92; TNA, Prob 20/2650.

⁶⁵ MacDonald and Murphy, *Sleepless Souls*, pp. 35, 42–60, 86–8, 260, 266–71.

⁶⁶ Jason McElligott and David L. Smith, eds., *Royalists and Royalism during the English Civil Wars* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 4, 66–88; TNA, Prob 20/2650.

⁶⁷ Perez Zagorin, *Ways of Lying* (Cambridge, MA, 1990).

⁶⁸ Violet, *Journals*, pp. 20, 27, 32; Violet, *Appeal to Caesar*, p. 54; Anon., *Trojaner*, p. 6.

⁶⁹ Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 247–8, 353–4.

⁷⁰ J. Farnell, 'The Navigation Act of 1651', *ECHR*, n.s., 16 (1964), 439–54; Robert Brenner, *Merchants and Revolution* (Princeton, NJ, 1993).

Commonwealth and Protectorate foreign policy, potential economic advantages and theological considerations – the necessity of converting the Jews before Christ's reappearance – also combined to create the necessary conditions in the face of widespread hostility to a debate about the readmission of the Jews to England. Modern scholarship, which is extensive, has tended to focus on Menasseh ben Israel's mission to Oliver Cromwell and the background to the Whitehall Conference of December 1655. Moreover, through a combination of hindsight and an understandable willingness to hold anniversary celebrations, 1656 is now widely trumpeted as an irreversible moment that marked the gradual informal readmission of Jews to England after a supposed absence of 366 years. While the so-called Resettlement was certainly a *de facto* if not *de jure* watershed, the tenor of this essay agrees with the direction of relatively recent work by David Katz, James Shapiro and Eliane Glaser among others in challenging the traditional optimistic, perhaps even convenient, picture of hitherto rootless persecuted aliens transformed through a strong current of Protestant philo-Semitism into grateful beneficiaries of a uniquely English form of religious toleration based on the peculiarities of common law.⁷¹ In fact, it needs to be emphasized that there was no act of parliament, no proclamation from Cromwell, no order from the Council of State either welcoming Jews to England or changing their legal status as a community from aliens (foreigners whose allegiance was due to a foreign state) to denizens (foreigners admitted to residence and granted certain rights, notably to prosecute or to defend themselves in law and to purchase or sell land, but still subject to the same customs duties on their goods and merchandise as aliens). The only evidence we have suggests that publicly Cromwell remained undecided on the issue, even if, according to the Tuscan envoy Francesco Salveti, he connived in permitting Jews to continue worshipping privately in their homes, a gesture consonant with the spirit of certain clauses of the *Instrument of Government* of December 1653, which had extended religious toleration to those Protestant sects that did not disturb the peace.⁷²

Furthermore, by focusing on a comparatively neglected brief period in Anglo-Jewish history spanning the twilight of the English republic and the dawn of the Restoration, I have implicitly questioned the conventional chronological arrangement characteristic of several older grand narratives of Anglo-Jewish history: a broad-brush tripartite division into

⁷¹ D. Katz, 'English redemption and Jewish readmission', *Journal of Jewish Studies*, 34 (1983), 73–91; David Katz, *Jews in the History of England* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 132–4; Shapiro, *State, Jewry and the Jews*, pp. 53–5, 60–2, 65–7; Eliane Glaser, *Judaism without Jews* (Basingstoke, 2007), pp. 1–3, 7–27.

⁷² C. Roth, 'New light on the Resettlement', *TJHSE*, 11 (1928), 112–42, at 131, 141.

pre-Expulsion Period (mainly 1066–1290), Middle Period (1290–1655), and Modern Period (1656 to the present). Again, this is in keeping with a growing trend which favours integrating the crypto-Jewish and Jewish experience within English history rather than constructing an insular history of the Jews in England. It is also evident from the preceding account that with Cromwell's death on 3 September 1658, individuals professing their Judaism, both long-term residents and recent immigrants, were collectively vulnerable. No longer considered as under his personal protection they were once more exposed to full-blown prejudice which intermingled 'horrid' accusations revolving around the repulsive if familiar themes of deicide, blasphemy, blood, diabolism, magic and money.⁷³ Thus throughout 1659 London merchants trading with Spain voiced their complaints against Jewish competitors – these 'Horseleeches of every Commonwealth, State, and Kingdom' – by pamphleteering and petitioning; in one instance proposing to expel or banish them and appropriate their profits for the state's use.⁷⁴ As we have seen, Violet's traps and stratagems are of a piece with this clamour to push the Jews out through the door that Oliver Protector had tacitly opened, and close it shut behind them. Yet to appreciate fully the precarious position of London's tiny Jewish community at this time we must also be aware both of long-term developments stretching back to the legal issues surrounding the Expulsion of 1290 and of a variety of contexts. These include the fate of Jews in western Europe since the late fifteenth century; voyages of exploration and the European discovery of new lands; the invention of movable printing type and mass production of texts; the growth of biblical learning and rejuvenation of Hebrew studies; the Reformation and attendant dissemination of Lutheran and Calvinist teaching; the role of the Inquisition, especially in Iberia, in the Canary Islands and on the Italian peninsula; the use of agents to facilitate intelligence gathering and diplomacy; millenarianism and Judaizing (even in the absence of authentic Jews); debates about liberty of conscience and the treatment of religious minorities, notably Catholics and sectaries; English attitudes towards foreigners, especially Huguenots and other Protestant exiles; and financial markets, international trading networks and other economic issues.

While a detailed examination of Violet's machinations cannot transform our understanding of all the interwoven threads that, taken together, form the larger tapestry of this moment in Anglo-Jewish history – or for

⁷³ Wolf, *Menasseh's Mission*, pp. 107–22.

⁷⁴ Anon., *To the Right Honourable knights* (1659), brs.; [Richard Baker], *Merchants humble petition* (1659), pp. 9, 17, repr. in Wolf, 'Status of Jews', 186; Bland, *Trade revived*, pp. 2, 20–3.

that matter the English Revolution – it can nonetheless provide welcome texture. Indeed, the significance of an individual's life and thought to the historian can be measured in any number of ways. Violet's importance thus rests ultimately not so much on his achievements and failures, or on how many friends and enemies he made, or even on how many people read or owned his work,⁷⁵ but on what his experiences tell us about his times and the human condition itself. In this marriage of the particular with the general, this effort to tease out all the nuances from the extant sources and to integrate the conclusions within a wider whole we see, of course, a response to revisionism and its challenges.

⁷⁵ *Catalogus Librorum . . . Benjaminis Worsley* (1678), p. 98 no. 490; Giovanni Tarantino, ed., *Lo scrittoio di Anthony Collins* (Milan, 2007), p. 490 no. 10030.