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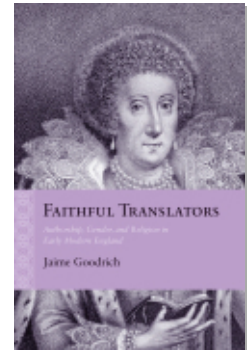
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CHAPTER FOUR



Anonymous Representatives

Mary Percy, Potentiana Deacon,
and Monastic Spirituality

In 1632, an English translation of Saint François de Sales's *Delicious Entertainments of the Soule* appeared, attributed on the title page only to "a Dame of Our Ladies of comfort of the order of S[aint] Bennet in Cambrai." The anonymity of the translator, a member of the English Benedictine convent in Cambrai, met the heightened verbal chastity expected of enclosed nuns. More important, this refusal to take public credit for her work signaled the translator's incorporation within the collective identity of her house. Such self-abnegation conformed to the strictures of monastic life, particularly the vows of poverty, obedience, and chastity. The Benedictine *Rule*, for example, praises obedience as the cornerstone of the Benedictine virtue of humility, noting that the nuns "ought to have neither bodyes nor wills at their owne disposing."¹ The constitutions of the Cambrai house cite this admonition as a rationale for the elimination of personal property in favor of communal ownership: it is "strictlie forbidden, to give, take, lend, send, beg, aske, receive, or [ex]chang directlie or indirectlie, in there persons or names; much or little; neither cloathes, monney, letters, tokens, gifts, for anie thing whatsoever," so that "whatsoever is gotten or given to the Monastarie, must be appropriated to the wholl communitie."² As this prohibition on personal belongings suggests, within the communal framework of the convent, all individual labor, including literary production, became part of the house's collective goods. By withholding her identity, the anonymous translator of the *Delicious Entertainments* performed this renunciation of personal property. Yet the translator could have achieved this goal without identifying herself as a member of the Cambrai convent, which suggests that the implications of her anonymity require closer scrutiny. By revealing her religious affiliation, this anonymous "Dame" gestured

at the corporate nature of the Cambrai convent and consequently transformed herself into an unnamed representative of her house to the outside world.

The critical history of the *Delicious Entertainments* reveals that this apparent evocation of the Cambrai convent's piety was not as straightforward as it might seem. Like other English convents on the Continent, the Cambrai Benedictines experienced discord over Ignatian spiritual direction. Many convents relied upon Jesuit confessors, who adapted the *Spiritual Exercises*—which Ignatius of Loyola developed to help male spiritual directors guide their male penitents—for this new setting. The *Spiritual Exercises* and other Ignatian meditative treatises aimed to stir the penitent to action, whether internal or external, through examination of conscience, guided contemplations, and methodical set prayers, such as using all the senses to re-create pivotal biblical moments.³ Some nuns found these practices conducive to mystical experiences, as when Lucy (Elizabeth) Knatchbull of the Brussels and Ghent Benedictines used the self-examination sparked by the *Spiritual Exercises* to enter her own contemplative raptures.⁴ Yet Father Augustine (David) Baker OSB, the unofficial spiritual director of the Cambrai house, believed that the action-oriented, prescriptive spirituality of the Jesuits was inappropriate for the meditative life of nuns: “The exercises of those men cannot be trulie Contemplative and spirituall, nor they be internall and Contemplative livers: But their exercises and living must be in the active life.”⁵ Baker instead advocated an individualized spirituality based on following God's internal directions rather than a spiritual director: “Nor doth God use to illuminate anie man fullie to the purpose; I meane as to the guidance of another, but illuminateth the soule herself.”⁶ Baker's approach prevailed among the Cambrai Benedictines, and A. F. Allison and D. M. Rogers tentatively attributed the translation to Agnes (Grace) More, another Cambrai nun who translated a mystical treatise compatible with Baker's philosophy.⁷ Nevertheless, a catalog of the house's library drawn up by Baker himself definitively attributes a manuscript copy of the translation to “D[ame] Potentiana a religious of this house.”⁸ Potentiana (Elizabeth) Deacon rejected Baker's approach to mysticism in favor of Ignatian prayer, and her recent editors Jos Blom and Frans Blom have observed that the *Delicious Entertainments* is at odds with the house's mainstream practices.⁹ Deacon's apparent representation of her convent's piety was therefore an assertive attempt to manage outside perceptions of the house. By naming herself only as “a Dame of our Ladies of comfort,” Deacon implied that her rejection of contemplative mysticism—a minority viewpoint within the house—truly reflected the

convent's attitudes. While Deacon's preferred spirituality held little sway within her convent, anonymity gave her a potential opportunity to shape public views of the Cambrai nuns.

This chapter will consider the ways that anonymity could evoke collective identity by examining Deacon's *Delicious Entertainments* as well as an anonymously published translation by Mary Percy of the Brussels Benedictines. Scholars such as Marcy North have already shown that anonymity was a vital and complex form of authorship with substantial advantages for authors and printmakers alike.¹⁰ In the cases of Deacon and Percy, anonymity might seem to suggest that both women were doubly subject to patriarchal authority, hampered by enclosure as well as early modern prescriptions limiting women's public speech. Nevertheless, anonymity did much more than simply permit Deacon and Percy to fend off criticism: it also allowed their publications to represent their convents at large and to influence public views about English monasticism. After Jesuit priests encouraged postulants to leave the Brussels convent, Percy translated a mystical treatise written by an Ignatian priest and his penitent that implicitly legitimated the place of Ignatian spirituality within the cloister. Deacon followed Percy's example by translating the *Delicious Entertainments*, which advocated Ignatian piety for cloistered women even as the Cambrai convent faced an investigation into the orthodoxy of its spirituality. Anonymity might seem to elide the agency of the translator and foreground the text's original author, yet these cases reveal that it could serve as a form of corporate authorship that empowered the translator to speak on behalf of her larger religious community.

Collective Voices: Anonymous Translation and Dissident Religious Groups

Members of dissident religious groups often found anonymous translation a potent means of defining their faction's views. In 1560, a group of English exiles in Geneva published a translation of the Bible that sought to influence the direction of the nascent Elizabethan church. By crafting prefatory material that employed a communal voice, the exiles positioned themselves as a unified front dedicated to the cause of Calvinism. The translation's associations with Geneva were highlighted on both the title page and in the dedicatory epistle to Elizabeth I written by her "humble subjects of the English Church at Geneva." This dedication collectively urged Elizabeth to purify the English church in the manner of biblical reformers: "When we . . . consider earnestly how much greater

charge God hath laid upon you in making you a builder of his spiritual Temple, we can not but partely feare, knowing the craft and force of Satan our spiritual enemy, and the weakenes and unabilitie of this our nature: and partely be fervent in our prayers toward God that he wolde bring to perfection this noble worke . . . and therefore we indeavour our selves by all meanes to ayde, & to bestowe our whole force under your graces standard.”¹¹ By speaking in the first person plural voice (“we”), the preface invokes the broader community of Geneva exiles to suggest their shared support for further church reform as well as their willingness to assist this project. This use of collective authorship also sidestepped Elizabeth’s hostile attitude toward the Geneva community. John Calvin had dedicated his revised commentary on Isaiah to Elizabeth in 1559, but he informed William Cecil that his work had been poorly received: “The messenger to whom I had given my commentaries on Isaiah to be offered to the queen, brought me back word, that my homage was rather distasteful to her majesty, because she had been offended with me on account of certain writings that had been published in this city.”¹² These offensive “writings” were Christopher Goodman’s *How Superior Powers Oght to Be Obeyd* and John Knox’s *The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstruous Regiment of Women*, which attacked female rulers. By assuming a communal voice, the paratexts to the Geneva Bible framed this text as the shared labor of a community characterized by a commitment to reform rather than by its controversial leaders.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s discussion of the political agency inherent in collectivity illuminates the full ramifications of this communal voice: “Agency presumes collectivity, which is where a group acts by synecdoche: the part that seems to agree is taken to stand for the whole. I put aside the surplus of my subjectivity and metonymise myself, count myself as the part by which I am connected to the particular predicament so that I can claim collectivity, and engage in action validated by that very collective.”¹³ According to this idea, a member of a group can gain power simply by identifying him- or herself as such, which in turn suggests that this individual represents the larger collective entity. Of course, complete unity within any group is unlikely, as Spivak’s phrasing indicates (“seems to imply”), meaning that any synecdochic representation of a collective is inherently illusory. Spivak further notes that leaders are more likely to have the potential for gaining agency as synecdoches of their organizations or communities: “In general, the leaders of collectivities . . . have the right to the metonym/synecdoche complex. That the rank and file do not, sometimes gets overlooked.”¹⁴ Elizabeth’s reaction to Calvin’s dedication indicates the way that leaders could serve

as synecdoches for their communities. Goodman's tract had advertised both his name and his location in Geneva, thus apparently voicing the opinions of the Geneva exiles. While Knox's treatise was published anonymously, its authorship was well known to Elizabeth. Yet since these books were associated with specific figures, they were all the easier for others in Geneva to deny, and Calvin assured Cecil that he did not share Knox's views. The anonymous but collective voice of the Geneva Bible, however, removed such specificity to represent the entire community, even though the work was composed by its leaders (primarily William Whittingham). The Bible thus gained an authorial fluidity more potent than if it had been identified as the work of Whittingham.

During the early modern period, translators of subversive religious texts often used anonymity to hide their identity, but some took on a synecdochic role by identifying themselves solely as members of well-defined religious institutions or groups. As the case of the Geneva Bible indicates, one form of collective anonymity occurred when group leaders spoke anonymously for their entire community. Likewise, the Douai-Rheims Bible adopts a collective voice that portrays the text as the work of a specific religious community, this time Roman Catholic: the English College at Douai (and temporarily Rheims). The title pages for the 1582 New Testament and the 1609 Old Testament attribute the work to the English College itself, rather than Gregory Martin, the main translator, and the prefaces to both are written in a corporate voice. The preface to the Old Testament, for example, alludes to the severe financial troubles that the college had recently experienced: "You wil hereby . . . perceive our fervent good wil, ever to serve you, in that we have brought forth this Tome, in these hardest times, of above fourtie yeares, since this College was most happely begune."¹⁵ By drawing attention to the communal nature of the college, the preface suggests this institution's fervent dedication to advancing the English mission at all costs. Members of Catholic religious orders also took on a synecdochic authority by publishing anonymous translations that nevertheless identified the translator's religious affiliation. John Wilson, a secular priest, issued most of these publications during his tenure as supervisor of the Jesuit press at the English College in Saint Omer from 1608 to 1635. Title pages to anonymous translations of works by Carthusian and Franciscan monks noted that the translators were of the same order as the original authors, thus familiarizing readers in England—where monasticism had no visible presence—with the spiritual approaches of these orders.¹⁶ A number of anonymous translations bore a phrase that must have seemed commonplace by the end of Wilson's career: "translated into English by a father of the Society of Jesus."

Jesuit translators frequently chose Ignatian source texts that could aid the English mission but also raised the profile of their order as purveyors of cutting-edge spiritual practices: Robert Bellarmino, SJ; Vincenzo Bruno, SJ; Ignatius of Loyola, SJ; and Teresa of Avila.¹⁷ By 1620 Wilson had also dedicated anonymous translations by Thomas Everard, SJ, to the abbesses of the four English convents then in operation (the Brussels Benedictines, the Louvain Augustinians, the Lisbon Bridgettines, and the Gravelines Poor Clares).¹⁸ These publications invoked the synecdochic role of both the anonymous Jesuit translator and the abbesses to suggest that Ignatian spirituality was compatible with monasticism.

Like these men, female translators used anonymity in a synecdochic fashion. Yet since women generally held unofficial leadership roles within religious groups, only nuns exercised the collective anonymity evident in the Geneva and Douai-Rheims Bibles. Some women identified themselves as members of religious communities by dedicating translations to patrons who were well known for their distinctive piety. In 1560 Anne Lock, herself a Geneva exile and a close friend of Knox, published a translation of Calvin under her initials, addressing the work to a woman who had also experienced substantial travails while in exile: Katherine Bertie, Duchess of Suffolk. By claiming personal knowledge of Bertie's exemplary Protestant piety, Lock indicates her own participation in reformist circles: "How [God] is continually to be thanked, your graces profession of his worde, your abidyng in the same, the godly conversation that I have sene in you, do prove that your selfe do better understand & practise than I can admonishe you."¹⁹ Elizabeth Cary, who had recently converted to Catholicism, dedicated her anonymous 1630 translation of Jacques Davy Du Perron to Queen Henrietta Maria, the highest-ranking Catholic woman in the country. In the preface to the reader, Cary withheld her name even as she revealed her gender: "I desire to have noe more guest at of me, but that I am a Catholique, and a Woman: the first serves for mine honor, and the second, for my excuse." Nevertheless, the dedicatory preface to Henrietta Maria approvingly mentioned the queen's fervent Catholicism, positioning the unknown female translator within her coterie of Catholic noblewomen: "You are a Catholicke, and a zealous one, and therefore fittest to receive the dedication of a Catholicke-worke."²⁰ As a result, Cary's translation suggested that support for Catholicism extended throughout the aristocracy and royal family.

Catholic women who were members of religious orders were in a better position to follow the example of their male counterparts, as they could identify themselves as members of their orders or particular

houses. Catherine Magdalen (Elizabeth) Evelinge, a Poor Clare, created a unique form of authorship that is comparable to synecdochic anonymity by ascribing two printed translations to Magdalen of St Austin (Catherine) Bentley, another nun at her house. These misattributions allowed Evelinge to influence public views of Franciscan piety even as she humbly conformed to her order's emphasis on poverty by divesting herself of authorship.²¹ The synecdochic potential of these translations is evident in Evelinge's 1635 translation of Saint Clare's life, which contains a dedicatory preface to Henrietta Maria written in the collective voice of "The English poore-Clares of Aire": "We will therefore, ever pray the only Ruler of Princes, which hath set a Diademe of pure gold upon your head, to prevent you with the blessings of his goodnes, and grant unto your Majestie a long and prosperous joynt-reigne with our Sovereigne Liege-Lord, King Charles, and a glorious Race from your Royall loynes to the Crowne."²² As portress and a founding member of the Aire convent, Evelinge held a leadership role within the house that may have empowered her to speak for the community. In doing so, she suggested their shared zeal for the birth of a Catholic heir ("a glorious Race") who could consolidate Catholic influence in England and presumably lead to the nation's conversion. For some secular and monastic women, anonymous translation did not just serve as a means of preserving verbal chastity. Rather, these translators renounced their individual identities to shape perceptions of their religious circles or communities, using the collectivity implied by synecdoche to enter the public sphere and claim a mediated form of authority.

God's Currency: Mary Percy, Ignatian Mysticism, and English Monasticism

Like many other English Catholics who knew foreign languages, Mary Percy and several of her confessors—John Gerard, SJ; Richard Gibbons, SJ; Anthony Hoskins, SJ; and Robert Chambers—turned to translation to promulgate and defend Roman Catholicism after Elizabeth's accession. With the exception of Mary's brief reign, England had little exposure to the Counter-Reformation, and translation allowed Catholics to import innovative theology and devotional practices from the Continent. Such publications were all the more important as a means of sustaining Catholic identity since the furtive and unsettled nature of the English mission meant that many English Catholics had limited access to priests. The translations emerging from Percy's circle offered political

and spiritual guidance for English Catholics, frequently employing synecdochic authorship to suggest that these works bore the imprimatur of a specific religious order or community. These apparent endorsements strengthened the polemical nature of the translations themselves, which consistently sought to influence the religious views of English readers, whether in England or abroad.

Both Gerard and Gibbons published anonymous translations implying that Jesuit priests supported English nuns and, in particular, the Brussels Benedictines. Gerard helped Percy leave England to become a nun, and he showed a special interest in the Benedictine convent that she founded at Brussels in 1598.²³ That same year, a secret press in London issued Gerard's anonymous translation of *The Spiritual Conflict*, a popular spiritual work by Lorenzo Scupoli, CR. A preface by Jerome, Count of Portia, dedicates the treatise to nuns at a Venetian convent, portraying the cloister as an important arena of spiritual warfare and in turn reminding English readers of the prestige of nuns: "By our Lord you are called and particularly chosen to this no lesse glorious, then hard conflict. We declare not here how to vanquish cities, but how to overcome our will."²⁴ If Gerard's translation may have offered oblique support for Percy's enterprise, a woodcut of the Jesuit insignia IHS on the title page linked English Jesuits with monastic women's spirituality.²⁵ Gibbons conducted a retreat for Mary Percy in 1597, and he later published a translation of *The Virgin Maries Life* (1604) by Luca Pinelli, SJ, that openly linked the Brussels convent with Jesuit piety.²⁶ While Gibbons signed the work only with his initials, the title page advertised that this work was originally composed by "the Reverend father Lucas Pinelli of the Societie of Jesus." Gibbons dedicated his translation to Abbess Joanna Berkeley, indicating that she would recognize the value of Ignatian piety: "I have beene so bould, Religious and vertuous Madame, as to direct this litle booke to you, and make you a present ther of, as one worthie to receive & keepe such a jewel. . . . I know right wel, how much more you doe value and esteeme spiritual, then temporal treasures."²⁷ Besides suggesting the cachet attached to nuns' piety, the translations of Gerard and Gibbons encouraged readers to associate female monasticism with Ignatian spirituality.

Hoskins, vice-prefect of the English Jesuits in Flanders as well as an extraordinary confessor at the Brussels Benedictines, used anonymous translations to intervene in political controversies that adversely affected Jesuits. With *The Apologies of the Most Christian Kinges of France and Navar* (1611), Hoskins hoped to rebut the "almost daily Libels against the Society of Jesus, concerning the killing of Tyrants; and namely of the

death of the most Christian King Henry the fourth.”²⁸ Hoskins countered these “Libels” by translating several brief documents exonerating the Jesuits by Henry IV, Louis XIII, and others. This translation was published under the initials *H. I.*, but its openly pro-Jesuit stance left no question about the translator’s views. Hoskins also participated in the international controversy over the oath of allegiance, which James I required his subjects to swear in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot, with *A Briefe and Cleare Declaration of Sundry Pointes Absolutely Dislyked in the Lately Enacted Oath of Allegiance* (1611). This anonymous work supplied a summary and partial translation of a 1611 treatise by Leonardus Lessius, SJ, that had been printed at Saint Omer before being banned by Rome. Hoskins explains that he has prepared this text in haste so that readers can learn that “the feare which Catholickes have of offending the Majestie of Allmighty God, and their care of preserving their Consciences from violating the fayth which they professe, is the only cause that moveth them to declayne in some sort from the exact performance of his Majesties Commaundement.”²⁹ Finally, Hoskins indirectly addressed the Gunpowder Plot by dedicating an edition of Thomas à Kempis’s *The Following of Christ* (1613) to Elizabeth Vaux, a benefactor of the Brussels convent who aided Gerard after the Gunpowder Plot and suffered imprisonment from 1611 to 1613. Hoskins’s preface artfully alludes to Vaux’s imprisonment by praising the solace found in Kempis’s text: “It raiseth up to cheerefull confidence the debased head, and placeth in a Throne of endles Honour those who in this world doe seeme imprisoned in the blacke cloud of disgrace.”³⁰ A woodcut of the Jesuit insignia on the title page suggested the text’s Ignatian ties, perhaps to remind readers of the society’s reputation for spiritual counsel. While Hoskins’s translations did not always reveal his religious affiliation, they consistently attempted to influence the ways that English readers viewed Jesuits.

Finally, Robert Chambers, a secular priest and ordinary confessor at the Brussels convent, interceded in English politics by publishing a translation that petitioned James I to lessen persecution of Catholics after the Gunpowder Plot: *Miracles Lately Wrought by the Intercession of the Glorious Virgin Marie, at Mont-aigu* (1606). The title page identifies Chambers by name and office, drawing on the reputation of the Brussels Benedictines to establish the translator’s authority among English Catholics: “Translated . . . by M[aster] Robert Chambers Priest, and confessor of the English Religious Dames in the Citie of Bruxelles.” In a lengthy dedicatory preface to James, Chambers defends the validity of miracles by citing sources ranging from the Bible to Augustine to Foxe’s

Actes and Monuments. Similarly, Chambers's epistle to the reader argues for the legitimacy of pilgrimage, images, adoration of saints, and intercessory prayers. Chambers also appealed directly to James on behalf of English Catholics by evoking the international outrage that followed the execution of his mother Mary, Queen of Scots: "All the world could not but have justly condemned that person as very injurious to your Majestie, who ever should have dared to have had as much as a thought that your Highnes would ever (I do not say) commaund, but so much as permitt that the Catholiks, your mothers chiefest if not her onely frendes, should be any wayes molested, and much lesse indamaged, impoverished, imprisoned, condemned and put to death for the profession of her faith."³¹ Chambers's institutional credentials probably enhanced the legitimacy of his doctrinal and polemical agendas among English Catholics. When Mary Percy collaborated with Hoskins on a translation of her own, she must have been well aware of the ways that translation could serve Catholic interests, particularly through authorial poses that invoked the translator's larger religious community.

As increasing numbers of Englishwomen joined or founded convents on the Continent, Mary Percy offered a blueprint for monastic spirituality that combined mysticism and Ignatian methods by publishing her translation of *An Abridgment of Christian Perfection* (1612). Percy's interest in Ignatian piety was largely representative of spiritual preferences at the Brussels convent, which had benefited tremendously from the assistance of English Jesuits. William Holt, SJ, vice-prefect of the English Jesuits in Flanders, convinced Percy to found a convent for Englishwomen rather than join a preexisting continental house. Holt then facilitated the convent's foundation by seeking approval from local rulers Archduke Albert and Archduchess Isabella, locating an appropriate building, identifying a suitable first abbess (Joanna Berkeley), and raising money.³² Robert Persons, SJ, obtained papal approval for the foundation, and William Baldwin, SJ, Holt's successor as vice-prefect, arranged for Philip III of Spain to pay a monthly pension to the house.³³ Although Ignatius forbade the Society from serving as ordinary confessors to convents, English Jesuits acted as extraordinary confessors for Brussels nuns to supplement the ordinary confessor appointed by the archbishop of Mechelen.³⁴ While the ordinary confessor performed the weekly Mass and oversaw confessions, the nuns had recourse to Jesuit priests for the *Spiritual Exercises* as well as individual guidance for spiritual difficulties. Unsurprisingly, the Brussels house attracted many novices who were strongly devoted to Ignatian piety. Mary (Jane) Lovell, who entered the

house as a novice in 1608, was described by the intelligencer Thomas Edmondson as “the most passionate besotted poore woman that ever was with the opinyon of the Jesuite.”³⁵ Many early entrants had Jesuit relations, and the house became a refuge for women with connections to the Gunpowder Plot, including Magdalen (Elizabeth) Digby, sister of Erard Digby, and Mary Roper, niece of Elizabeth Vaux.

Yet in 1609, Abbess Berkeley found herself at odds with Baldwin, a conflict that threatened the house’s close relationship with Jesuit priests. On April 13, 1609, Edmondson reported that Lovell, then a postulant, was having difficulty conforming to monastic life: “The Ladie Lovell is very much distracted whether she should resolve to persever in the course of a Nunne . . . for that she doth not only very ill brooke the severities of that lyfe, but also the disagreements which have bin betweene her & the Abbesse, for seeking to reclayme her haultie humor. . . . She is become almost desperate, & the Jesuittes are noe lesse troubled to keepe her from relenting to avoyd the geiving of scandal.”³⁶ Edmondson claimed that the Jesuits were only interested in maintaining control of Lovell’s money, but even so his report reveals the deep concerns Jesuits had about Lovell’s future in the house. Baldwin may therefore have encouraged a letter that Berkeley sent to the archbishop of Mechelen on March 31 requesting that Percy and several unnamed postulants be allowed to found a new house: “Cum . . . Congregationem hanc nostrum annis aliquot numero crescente defectu loci amplioris arctatam fuisse, arbitramur e re Monastici nostri instituti futurum, atque singulari multarum solatio quae religionem nostrum ambiunt, si nonnullae huius nostrae Congregationis Professae cum aliquot Novitiis et Discipulis alibi constituentur” (Since . . . this our congregation has been confined for some years by a growing number [and] the lack of greater space, we judge of the matter that it would be an unparalleled comfort to our monastic institution and the many women who strive for our religion, if some professed [nuns] of this our congregation with some novices and scholars were established elsewhere).³⁷ Berkeley may have hoped that Lovell would leave for this filiation, solving in one stroke the house’s problems with space as well as the question of Lovell’s vocation. After Berkeley’s suit was denied, Jesuit priests urged several postulants to found a new monastery, as Lucy Knatchbull later noted: “Some Persons whose judgment I knew no reason to suspect advised divers of us that were Scholars to begin a new Monastery. That which made me hearken to it was a report (not bruited of malice, as I hope) that the Fathers of the Society of Jesus should not be suffered by the Superior of this House, to continue to give us that direction for Spirit which we expected.”³⁸ As these women had not yet

professed, they could leave without the archbishop's permission, unlike Percy. Knatchbull, Lovell, and Digby consequently went to Louvain, an ideal location because the English Jesuits had recently formed a novitiate there under the guidance of Gerard. Yet by August the venture had clearly failed, and Baldwin interceded with Berkeley so that Knatchbull and Digby could return to the Brussels convent.³⁹

Several anecdotes from 1609 suggest that the nuns who remained at Brussels viewed these events as significant threats to the convent's well-being. An anecdote associated with lay sister Martha (Margaret) Whittaker provides useful insight into the tensions between Berkeley and an unnamed man, identified by the house's nineteenth-century *Chronicles* as Baldwin:

Being one morning in prayer, she suddenly heard within her: "Go to such a person . . . and tell him to leave off what he is about, for he shall never bring to pass what he desires." Whereupon, going unto him, she told him on the part of God what His Divine Majesty had commanded her. But the person believed her not, & answered that the business would take effect, for that the persons were now about to go forth. . . . Whereunto she answered, "Father, you shall never have them forth." Soon after this, she again understood the following words to be spoken to her in prayer. "Tell that person that he has made disquiet between Superior & Superiors, between children & Superior; and therefore let him make peace with all speed." Whereunto she answered. "Lord why will you send me unto him? I am a simple woman, and he a learned man, he will not believe me." But she being encouraged by God went and told the person what she had been commanded. Upon which he presently laboured to make the peace, which was performed.⁴⁰

This tale evokes the discord caused by the departure of Knatchbull's party, as Baldwin may have seemed to support Lovell rather than Berkeley, her abbess and superior. Accordingly, Baldwin must "make peace" by ending the "disquiet" between Berkeley and the Jesuit fathers ("Superior & Superiors") as well as between Berkeley and either her community or the returning novices ("children & Superior"). Another account suggests that the house had already been saved by divine intervention that February: "A very devout good man fell into so great a disgust agaynst the monastery, and so ill an oppinion agaynst them, as he determined some great mischeefe to the hows." While this man slept, "our Blessed lady, having all the Religious of the monastery under her mantle, warnd him

with threats to desist from his ill intentions, adding that her sweete Sonn Jesus & her selfe had taken this monastery under their protection.”⁴¹ Chastened, the man sought confession from Chambers the next day and renounced his plans. The timing suggests that this man’s “disgust” may have arisen from the convent’s ongoing difficulties with Lovell and, by extension, her Jesuit supporters.

As a result, Berkeley may have begun to rethink the house’s previous dependence upon Jesuit assistance. Faced with a financial crisis in April 1611, Berkeley wrote to Benedictine superiors in Flanders for aid: “Being strangers in (this Country) their condition & circumstances are known to very few; hence they have received as yet but little, or no help, from any: the house they dwell in is very small, but has been purchased by their own fortunes; from which . . . they suffer scarcity & many incommodities.”⁴² Although the house had already received considerable financial help from the Jesuits and their contacts, Berkeley omits this fact and instead stresses the convent’s isolation from other English Catholics. That December, she similarly rewrote the house’s history in a letter to the archbishop regarding their proposed statutes. While Berkeley acknowledges that English Jesuits helped establish the house and later reviewed its statutes, she presents the monastery as the fulfillment of the missionary movement begun by Cardinal William Allen, who had attended her clothing in 1580. After mentioning the notable history of the Benedictine order in England, she remarks, “*Quae illustrissimae memoriae Illustrissimum et Reverendissimum Cardinalem Alanum . . . ita permoverunt ut . . . in hoc strenue incubuerit, qua ratione cum Catholica religione huius etiam Sacri Ordinis alumnos, et praecipue Moniales impia Haereticorum tyrannide flagitiosissime deletas, et exitio datas patriae suae restitueret*” (Which most illustrious memories so moved the Most Illustrious and Most Reverend Cardinal Allen . . . that . . . he strenuously devoted himself to this: by what method he might restore to their country—along with Catholic religion—likewise the nurslings of this sacred order, and chiefly the nuns most shamefully destroyed by the impious tyranny of heretics and cast into exile).⁴³ Yet Allen had died before Percy arrived in Flanders and consequently played no direct role in the house’s foundation. Even though Allen and Persons had a close working relationship, Berkeley downplays the house’s identification with Jesuit interests by presenting the labors of Persons and Holt as the realization of Allen’s plan.

Even as Berkeley’s reconsideration of Jesuit influence threatened to undermine the role of Jesuit priests at the Brussels Benedictines, Mary Percy affirmed that Ignatian spirituality had value within a monastic

context through her translation of *The Abridgment of Christian Perfection*. During this period, Percy strongly favored the Jesuit priests associated with the Brussels house, even writing Mutio Vitelleschi, the newly appointed general of the Jesuits, in 1618 to request that English Jesuits continue to advise the community.⁴⁴ Percy's translation of the *Abridgment* is an even earlier marker of her commitment to Ignatian piety, for several reasons. First, Percy collaborated with Hoskins on the translation, as Augustine Baker relates: "[The] preface was so Translated into English, by Fa[ther] Antony Hoskins, of the Society of Jesus (as I have bin Informed by One of the Dames of This House, who then was of Brussels) . . . the Residue (I mean, the whole Body of the Book) being of the Translation of the Said Lady Abbess: whom the Said Father A. Hoskins did moreover somewhat Aid (as I am likewise Informed) in the Translation of the Said Body of the Book; and did Procure, or Help for the Getting of it printed."⁴⁵ The text had first appeared in Italian (*Breve compendio*, c. 1588), but Percy and Hoskins worked from an intermediary French version (*Abregé de la perfection chrestienne*, 1598). Second, the translation offers a mixture of mysticism and Ignatian meditation that reflects Percy's own interests. Scholars now agree that Achille Gagliardi, SJ, and his penitent Isabella Berinzaga collaborated on the *Abridgment*, but in 1612 the work's authorship was unknown.⁴⁶ While Baker strenuously argued that the *Abridgment* could not have been composed by a Jesuit, readers steeped in Ignatian piety would have recognized the text's indebtedness to the *Spiritual Exercises*. Besides offering Ignatian-style meditations, the *Abridgment* cites two sections of the *Spiritual Exercises*—the "First Principle and Foundation" (no. 23) and the "Introduction to Making a Choice of a Way of Life" (no. 169)—as foundations for mystical progress: "The practice of all this consisteth, first in a totall indifferency in respect of things created, as we have set downe for the foundation of our exercises. Secondly to make election of an estate conformable to Gods wil . . . praying & working continually with the selfe same rules of our exercises."⁴⁷ Furthermore, as André Derville has observed, the text is based on Ignatian principles: "Plus d'un passage dépend directement des *Exercices*. L'ensemble est en cohérence avec la doctrine ignatienne de l'indifférence, de l'humilité, de l'*agere contra*" (More than one passage directly depends on the *Exercices*. The whole is in agreement with the Ignatian doctrine of indifference, of humility, of *agere contra*).⁴⁸ Percy may also have been drawn to this text due to its emphasis on self-abnegation. In 1609, Gerard remarked of Percy, "Often she asks her director for permission to become a recluse; but he is not in favour of it, and she has submitted to his advice."⁴⁹ Percy's translation

probably stemmed from her personal interest in using Ignatian methods as a means of pursuing detachment from the world.

Yet in publishing her translation, Percy framed the *Abridgment* as a model of monastic spirituality fit for all religious readers. Drawing on the French source text's preface, Percy crafts a humble authorial persona as an anonymous religious who might seem to speak for the larger English monastic community. D. C. M., the work's unknown French editor, dedicates the *Abridgment* to monks and nuns, observing that their praiseworthy "modesty, & humility" prevented him from dedicating the work to a specific individual (*ACP*, 5). Similarly, Percy's preface addresses "the religious of our nation" (*ACP*, *3r), and she states that the treatise is most appropriate for those who have taken the monastic vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience known as the evangelical counsels: "I doubt not to judg it fitly presented to the reading of all such, as have entred, or resolved to enter the pathes of Perfection, by imitation of Christ our Lord in practise and performance of the Counsellis Evangelicall" (*ACP*, *3r, *3v–*4r). Percy, like D. C. M., may only sign her preface with her initials ("P. M."), but she nevertheless indicates that she has undertaken religious vows by including herself among those striving for this "Perfection": "For the obtaining of this [perfection], I beseech his divine Goodnes to assist *us* all with his holy grace, and to replenish your soules with the comfort of his celestially spirit" (*ACP*, *7v, emphasis mine). Readers might therefore have viewed the translation as the work of an anonymous monastic who followed the methods contained in the *Abridgment*. Percy further suggests the monastic context of her translation by imitating other elements of D. C. M.'s preface. Just as D. C. M. cites Matthew 7:6 as evidence that secular readers could not appreciate the worth of this treatise ("the advertishment which our Saviour giveth us, that we give not holy things unto doggs, nor cast pearles before swine"; *ACP*, 3), Percy states that the *Abridgment* is not fit for "sensuall minds, who cannot discern the worth of such a pearle, but would rather trample it with their feete" (*ACP*, *3v). Similarly, D. C. M. praises the text by comparing it to the work of Saint Catherine of Siena, and Percy alludes to Catherine's mystic experiences to explain the value of subordinating self-will, a key tenet of the *Abridgment*: "Now it seemeth not to be her will that worketh, but the will of God which worketh in her: as though she had given her owne hart unto Christ: and, as we read of S[aint] Catherine of Siena, had received his in exchange" (*ACP*, *6v–7r). Percy refers to John Fen's 1609 translation of Catherine of Siena's life, which recounted this "exchange": "She made a special petition to him, that he would vouchsafe to take awaie her owne hart and will, and geve her an

other newe hart and will.”⁵⁰ As the title page to Fen’s translation noted, he was confessor to the English Augustinians of Louvain, so that Percy’s allusion evoked the milieu of English monasticism. By dedicating her translation to monks and nuns, identifying herself as an anonymous religious, and placing her work in conversation with other texts originating from the cloister, Percy suggested that the *Abridgment* was representative of English monasticism.

In introducing the main ideas of the *Abridgment*, Percy furthermore claimed that the text would help readers achieve a spiritual union with Christ that is inherently compatible with monastic life. *An Abridgment* guides readers through spiritual stages that eventually lead to deiformity, or complete fusion with God’s will. Elaborating upon D. C. M.’s description of the work as a “thresor” (treasure), Percy develops an extended metaphor of minting coins that invokes the monastic virtues of humility, poverty, chastity, and obedience.⁵¹ In the stage of annihilation, the soul “dig[s] & descend[s] into his owne nothing,” achieving the humility required by monastic life. The state of disappropriation causes the soul “to cast up and throw from him all the earthly substance which lieth between him & the treasure” (*ACP*, *5r), and Percy connects this phase with the monastic vow of poverty by offering a second definition for this term: “or as it is called in the Ghospel, by Renunciation of all things which he possesseth.” Here Percy alludes to Christ’s exhortation that the disciples embrace poverty (Luke 14:33), a command obeyed by monks and nuns: “every one of you that doth not renounce al that he possesseth, cannot be my disciple.”⁵² The next state, indifference, allows the soul “to cleanse” the treasure “from the dust of his private affections, and self-interest” (*ACP*, *5r), and then the stage of conformity “teacheth him first how to purifie the same from the drosse of all self-love” (*ACP*, *5v), leaving only a love for God that marks the soul as a truly chaste spouse of Christ. In the stage of uniformity, refinement through “the touchstone of Christ his example” transforms the soul “so that it then comes to be *Aurum ignitum*, spoken of in the Apocalyps, and one thing, as it were, with the fire it selfe.” Percy had already praised monastic imitation of Christ, and her reference to Revelation 3:18 suggests that the treatise offers Christ’s life as a “touchstone” that will lead to spiritual rewards: “I counsel thee to bye of me gold fire-tryed [*aurum ignitum*], that thou maiest be made riche.”⁵³ Finally, deiformity results in complete obedience to God as the treasure becomes “pliable to the will of him that worketh it” and ultimately “receave[s] the stampe of the heavenly King, that so it may be currant coyne in his divine Court. . . . This is the worke of grace in the soule, the workman is God himself,

and the stampe he imprinteth in it, is his owne Image” (*ACP*, *6r). Since souls achieving this final stage all bear God’s “stampe,” they become interchangeable tokens of God that collectively represent his treasure, mirroring the communal ideal of convent life. Readers who were aware of Percy’s identity might view this metaphor as evidence that the Brussels community remained united despite its recent problems. More broadly, this metaphor suggested that the *Abridgment* offered valuable guidance that might reinforce the collective identity of the cloister. By focusing on the treatise’s advocacy for mystical self-annihilation, Percy could avoid alienating readers like Berkeley and Baker, who might be skeptical of the value that Ignatian spirituality held for a monastic community.

While Percy’s translation generally offers a close rendering of her French source text, at times she reframes the *Abridgment* so that it is clearly aligned with monastic spirituality. Berinzaga and Gagliardi encourage readers to begin their ascent to union with God through complete self-abasement: “The first principle is, to have a meane & a base esteeme of things created, & above all of himself” (*ACP*, 12). To achieve this humility, they recommend that readers identify themselves with “dust, a sinke [cesspool], an Apostume [pustulent abscess]” (*ACP*, 16). As Derville has noted, this language draws on the First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises* (especially no. 58.4–5), which emphasizes self-examination of sins.⁵⁴ Berinzaga and Gagliardi develop this theme much more extensively than Ignatius does, and Percy removes several moments that dwell on self-abasement from the chapter on annihilation—perhaps because she and other nuns at the convent had had difficulties with spiritual desolation.⁵⁵ Strikingly, Percy replaces these passages with new material emphasizing monastic spirituality. Berinzaga and Gagliardi instruct the soul to enter into annihilation by “thinking herselfe the greatest sinner in the world, . . . attributing to herselfe all the sinnes that are committed, and that all their tormentes duly might be inflicted upon her” (*ACP*, 16–17). Percy omits the sentence following this passage: “Et cecy suppose une grande cognoissance du peché, comme offence de Dieu, &c” (*APC*, 174; And this assumes a great knowledge of sin, as offenses of God, etc.). This remark might seem to suggest that the soul should embark on a potentially unhealthy examination of sinfulness. Percy instead alleviates the severity of this passage by inserting a reminder of God’s providence: “For there is no sinne but she might have committed it, if God had not preserved her: examples of this may be seene in the lives of S[aint] Francis and S[aint] Catherine of Siena” (*ACP*, 17). An English translation of Francis’s life had recently been published, just as Fen had translated Catherine’s life, so that this alteration of the

text again places the *Abridgment* in conversation with other English-language works promoting monasticism.⁵⁶ Readers might already know that Saint Francis lived pleasurably before founding the Franciscan order and that Saint Catherine's parents attempted to prevent her from becoming a Dominican tertiary. As she had done in the preface, Percy alludes to exemplary models of monastic piety to emphasize the worth of this text for English members of religious orders.

An even more striking example of Percy's license with her source text occurs when she radically condenses a section that similarly advises readers to practice an excessive amount of self-degradation. As the 1599 edition is scarce, it may be useful to print the entire passage omitted by Percy:

Elle doit descendre en la cognoissance de ses pechez, vices, & defauts particuliers, s'abaissant tous les jours par ceste lumiere de la benignité de Dieu qui l'a supporté. Secondement faisant continuel progresz, en tel estime de sa bassesse elle doit venir en la pratique d'icelle, laquelle consiste premierement, en la haine de toute loüange honneur & dignité, & quand se presente l'occasion d'icelles les fuir de tout son pouvoir, puis que c'est hors de toute raison qu'à un rien & à une creature si vile & si meschante on donne ou fasse honneur; & l'ame qui vrayement sent sa petitesse, pense luy estre impossible de s'elever par loüange quelconque qui luy soit faicte, & à par soy s'en rit & s'en mocque, & tant plus se confound elle, & s'humilie davantage qu'elle apperçoit, combien elle est éloignee de toute bonté vertu & merite de loüange & honneur. Elle embrasse volontiers toutes occasions de mespris, confusions, affronts, persecutions, infamies, & autres choses semblables, & va au devant d'icelles avec joye & jubilation, & les accepte comme choses dignes de soy, & qu'elle a bien merité, remerciant nostre Seigneur qui l'a traicté comme il convient, & qui plus est s'estimant indigne d'estre ainsi visitée de Dieu, qui daigne exercer envers elle sa justice & sur tout s'esjouit grandement de cecy, à sçavoir de son opprobre & ignominie, pour autant qu'il en provient grande gloire à Dieu, & principalement à sa bonté, laquelle a daigné créer gouverner, racheter, & sauver chose si vile, & a luy tant rebelle. Tiercement de son costé tant qu'elle peut doit elire les choses plus basses & viles. (APC, 174–77)

She must descend into the knowledge of her sins, vices, and particular defaults, abasing herself every day by this light of the goodness of God who has supported her. Secondly, making continual

progress in such esteem of her lowness she must come to the practice of this, which consists first in the hatred of all praise, honor, and dignity, and when the occasion of these things presents itself, to flee them with all her power, since it is beyond all reason that one would give or do honor to a nothing and a creature so vile and evil; and the soul who truly feels her smallness, thinks it is impossible to raise herself by whatever praise which may be done to her, and by herself she laughs at and mocks it, and she confounds herself more and humbles herself further as much as she perceives how far she is estranged from all goodness, virtue, and merit of praise and honor. She voluntarily embraces all occasions of contempts, confusions, affronts, persecutions, infamies, and other similar things, and she goes past them with joy and jubilation, and accepts them as worthy of herself, and what she has well deserved, thanking our Lord who has treated her as it is fitting, and, what is more, esteeming herself unworthy to be thus visited by God, who deigns to exercise toward her his justice, and especially rejoices greatly in this, to know of her opprobrium and ignominy, for as much as great glory comes from these things to God, and principally to his goodness, which has deigned to create, govern, redeem, and save a thing so vile, and so rebellious to him. Thirdly, for her part as much as she can it is necessary to choose the lowest and most vile things. (my translation)

Repeatedly characterizing the soul as “vile,” Berinzaga and Gagliardi encourage the soul to dwell upon its own “sins, vices, and particular defaults” in order to abase itself so absolutely that the soul rejects all honor and welcomes scorn. This guidance is impractical in a monastic setting, where certain offices—such as abbess and prioress—not only require a degree of “praise, honor and dignity” but also must be fulfilled by members of the community. Percy shortens this passage so that it advocates renunciation of the world rather than the self: “She ought to descend to the knowledg of these thinges of the world, the better to contemne them: and for the rejecting of them, she must make choice of the vilest and basest of them” (*ACP*, 17). This alteration is reminiscent of Percy’s preface, which valorized those who have the “fortitude of mind as to contemne their former worldly estate, for the purchase of this field or state of religious life” (*ACP*, *4v). While the motive for this drastic abridgment appears to have been Percy’s distaste for the work’s extreme self-abasement, she takes this opportunity to reshape the *Abridgment* so that it supports her prefatory claims about the text’s relevance to monasticism.

Besides adding monastic elements to the *Abridgment*, Percy highlights several Ignatian aspects of the text, subtly legitimating the value of Ignatian spirituality within the cloister. As previously noted, Percy's preface asserted that monks and nuns "enter[ed] the pathes of Perfection, by imitation of Christ our Lord" (ACP, *4r). The text offers Ignatian-style contemplations that presented Christ as a model for monastic life with the "Ladder of Perfection," a series of exercises keyed to specific stages of the *Abridgment*. In format and intention, these meditations are reminiscent of the *Spiritual Exercises*, in which readers reflect on Christ's life in a methodical sequence that includes preparatory prayer, preludes, points to consider, and colloquies. Similarly, each set of meditations in the "Ladder" begins with a preparatory prayer focused on a moment in Christ's life followed by points for consideration meant to guide the reader's contemplation. As in the *Spiritual Exercises*, the overall effect of these meditations is to inspire readers to imitate Jesus Christ. For example, the preparatory prayer for the stage of conformity cites John 4:34 as a pattern for obeying God's will: "We must consider in these wordes (*Cibus meus est, ut faciam voluntatem Patris mei qui in caelis est*) that is to say, my meat is to doe the will of my father which is in heaven: and in other like speaches the great conformity that our Saviour Jesus had with the will of his eternall father. . . . And of this we may gather how much more we are obliged to do the same in his imitation" (ACP, 100). Percy underscores this insight by heightening Christ's willingness to die in the second point of the ensuing meditation: "The contentment in this conformity, did not bring him any asswagement of his sorrowes, but only made that his will sweetly reposed in them, and with so *prompt and ready a mind* [gayeté de coeur], *he willed and desired* them [vouloit]" (ACP, 104; APC, 302). By translating "vouloit" (he willed) with the doublet "he willed and desired," Percy emphasizes the harmony between the will of Christ and God, and her translation of "prompt and ready a mind" for "gayeté de coeur" (alacrity of heart) further underscores Christ's willingness to obey God. As a result, Percy reinforces the preparatory prayer's injunction that readers should take Christ as an example of conformity. By offering readers set exercises meant to facilitate mystical union with God, the "Ladder" implicitly legitimized Ignatian meditation as a useful means of helping readers to achieve the monastic ideals outlined in Percy's preface.

The *Abridgment* also emphasizes the Ignatian practice of discernment as a method to overcome self-love, which Berinzaga and Gagliardi present as the primary impediment to self-mortification. Within a monastic setting, self-love was highly problematic because it might interfere with

the ability to submit to superiors and monastic rules, and Lovell's case might have seemed to suggest that Jesuit priests only encouraged such insubordination. Percy, however, reworks the *Abridgment* so that it insists even more strongly on discernment as a tonic for self-love. The *Spiritual Exercises* instruct exercitants to use discretion in identifying the source of their spiritual movements: "It is characteristic of God and His Angels, when they act upon the soul, to give true happiness and spiritual joy, and to banish all the sadness and disturbances which are caused by the enemy. It is characteristic of the evil one to fight against such happiness and consolation by proposing fallacious reasonings, subtilties [*sic*], and continual deceptions."⁵⁷ In keeping with this idea, Berinzaga and Gagliardi offer "Remedies against Selfe-Love" that instruct the soul to determine whether apparent spiritual consolations actually result from self-love: "All things, how good and holy soever they be, are not always pleasing to God, but only those that come from him, *and are required by him* [added]. And by this we may know, *that they come from him* [added] when the said things do not move us nor *lift us up unto pride* [haussement & eslevant] in having them" (*ACP*, 142; *APC*, 367). Percy's additions to this passage underscore its point about the necessity of utilizing discernment to avoid self-love. Besides adding qualifying phrases claiming that God only "require[s]" certain consolations and that it is furthermore possible to know whether "they come from him," Percy hints at the possible spiritual danger of forgoing discernment by translating "haussement & eslevant" (raise and elevate) as "lift us up unto pride." Berinzaga and Gagliardi also argue that confessors who are well versed in discernment can provide crucial aid to souls experiencing self-love: "The soule infected herewith must seeke to have a person very much enlightned by God, that hath the discretion of [s]pirits" (*ACP*, 141). Percy reinforces this point by altering Berinzaga and Gagliardi's later advice to confessors: "The spirituall father, who *to take away, and cleere* [oster] the soule from all selfe love, in all that she pretendeth in her actions, and desires must first seeke all the meanes to penetrate into her hart, *that is to gaine her good opinion and estimation, and to be gratefull unto her* [added]; & afterwards he must begin with great sweetnes *to apply his remedies, and so to cure and heale her* [à la penser & mediciner]" (*ACP*, 143; *APC*, 368). Here Percy underscores the confessor's ability to aid mortification by translating "oster" (remove) with the doublet "take away and cleere" as well as by recasting the phrase "à la penser & mediciner" (to take care of her and to give her medicine) in solely medical terms: "to apply his remedies and so to cure and heale her." She also adds an explanatory gloss after "to penetrate into her hart" ("that is to gaine her good

opinion and estimation, and to be gratefull unto her”), suggesting the psychological subtlety needed to deal with these troubled souls. If Percy’s preface depicted the *Abridgment* as offering a method for enhancing monastic conformity, this emphasis on the role of discretion in eradicating self-love implies that Jesuit confessors are necessary allies in ensuring the spiritual perfection of individual nuns and preserving the concord of monastic institutions. After Lovell’s departure, this idea would have been particularly useful in refuting negative views of Jesuit involvement at the Brussels Benedictines.

Ultimately, Percy’s translation offered readers a form of monastic spirituality that was based upon Ignatian methods and motifs, legitimating the role of Ignatian practices at the Brussels Benedictines and beyond. The events of 1609 had threatened the unity of the Brussels Benedictines, and Berkeley may very well have viewed Lovell’s Jesuit advisers as the instigators of this breach of monastic order. Percy’s translation implicitly responded to these concerns by suggesting that Ignatian methods could encourage conformity to God’s will and so enhance the nuns’ adherence to monastic virtues. Within the immediate setting of Percy’s convent, this translation might have encouraged the house’s unwavering adherence to Ignatian precepts after Lovell’s departure. More generally, Percy’s self-presentation as an anonymous monastic translator might have suggested that the work was representative of English monasticism. While readers versed in Ignatian precepts may have received the impression that English monasticism was strongly tied to Ignatian spirituality, the text’s understated reliance on the *Spiritual Exercises* allowed it to serve as a model for readers who rejected Ignatian ideas, including Baker.

Percy’s translation saw two more editions that emphasized the Ignatian associations of her work even more firmly.⁵⁸ In 1612, Etienne Binet, SJ, published another French translation of the *Breve Compendio* that attributed the work to Gagliardi for the first time. John Wilson subsequently republished Percy’s translation in 1625, ascribing the work to Hoskins alone: “Written in Italian, by Fa[ther] Achilles Gagliardi of the Society of Jesus & translated into English by A. H. of the same Society.” Wilson also strengthened the 1625 edition’s association with Ignatian piety by adding material from the First Week of the *Spiritual Exercises*: “The Dayly Examen of Our Conscience” (no. 43), “The Particular Examen” (nos. 25–26), and “Foure Additions Very Profitable, for the More Easy & Speedy Rooting out of Any Vice” (nos. 27–31). Another paratext, “Certayne Advertiments Necessary for the Better Making of Our Prayer,” offers instructions on adapting aspects of the *Spiritual Exercises*, such as composition of place, for individual prayer.⁵⁹ In a second edition

dated 1626 but probably published in 1628, Wilson restored Percy's authorship, now ascribing the translation to "The Right Honourable, & Religious Lady, the La[dy] M. P." As Wilson retained the excerpts of the *Spiritual Exercises* added in the 1625 version, this edition implied that Percy, now abbess of the Brussels Benedictines, supported Ignatian spirituality. Ironically, by 1628 Percy was actively engaged in a dispute with pro-Jesuit nuns at her convent who objected to the appointment of an anti-Jesuit ordinary confessor. Percy's *Abridgment* thus continued to suggest the usefulness of Ignatian spirituality within a monastic setting even after she herself had decided that Jesuit confessors were not conducive to the spiritual health of her convent.

A Dame of Cambrai: Potentiana Deacon, François de Sales, and Monastic Order

As a member of Benedictine convents in Brussels and Cambrai, Potentiana Deacon had two distinct models for the way that translation could define a house's spirituality. Deacon professed at the Brussels Benedictines, where she would have gained firsthand knowledge of translations by Mary Percy and her confessors that intervened in public and private debates over Catholicism. Translated spiritual treatises were arguably even more important within the daily life of the Cambrai nuns as Augustine Baker, the Cambrai convent's unofficial spiritual guide, and several of the Cambrai nuns translated texts conducive to the house's focus on contemplative mysticism. Baker, however, resuscitated the medieval tradition in which the learning produced by and for the house remained largely within the cloister. Rather than seeking to influence the wider English Catholic community, most of the Cambrai translators circulated their work in manuscript to assist the house's spiritual development. While these two groups of translators may have disagreed over the place of monastic spirituality within the public sphere, both nonetheless viewed translation itself as an influential means of instilling piety.

The Cambrai nuns' interest in translation stemmed from Baker's view that reading mystical and spiritual works could facilitate contemplative progress.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, Baker did not take a prescriptive stance, instead urging the nuns to determine which texts met their particular needs: "Observe your own way, spirit, and call; and of books, take and practise according as you shall find to be proper and answerable to such a way, spirit, and call of yours; and no more or further."⁶¹ Baker assembled a library of diverse texts that would allow the Cambrai nuns the necessary

latitude to search for their distinctive calls. His *Catalogue of Such English Bookes as Are in This House, Most Helping toward Contemplation* recommends a variety of contemporary publications, including translations of saints' lives (*The Life of the Glorious Bishop S[aint] Patricke*, 1625), spiritual classics (*The Confessions of S[aint] Augustine*, 1620), and contemporary treatises (Percy's *Abridgment*).⁶² As Baker noted in a letter to Robert Cotton requesting manuscript copies of medieval devotional texts, few printed books offered guidance on mystical practices: "Their lives being contemplative the comon bookes of the worlde are not for their purpose, and litle or nothing is in thes daies printed in English that is proper for them."⁶³ Baker attempted to fill this gap by composing his own treatises, modernizing medieval classics (including *The Cloud of Unknowing*), and translating continental authors such as Louis de Blois. Baker's purpose in translating was primarily utilitarian: to provide the nuns with reading material that offered examples for readers to follow or reject. For example, Gertrude (Helen) More requested that Baker translate part of Constantine Barbanson into English after finding one passage especially inspiring: "O, O, that must be my waie, I pray you . . . lette me have that place translated into English."⁶⁴ Baker made no attempt to publish his translations, probably out of a belief that mystical works were not appropriate for general readers: "Not all are fit to read them [mystical treatises]. And it may be questioned whether they be fit at all to be printed and published."⁶⁵ Baker thus helped establish an environment in which literary production—including translation—took place largely for the spiritual benefit of the Cambrai nuns themselves rather than secular readers.

Baker's model endured after his departure from the house in 1632, as several Cambrai nuns translated French works into English to share exemplary mystical texts with the rest of the house. Abbess Catherine Gascoigne translated Charlotte de Saint-Jean l'Évangéliste Le Sergent's *Collection of Some Familiar Answers upon the Conduct of Soules in a Mistick Life* into English (*Recueil de quelques réponses familières, sur la conduit des âmes en la vie mystique*, 1657). While Le Sergent penned a dedicatory preface explaining that she had published the *Recueil* to contest an erroneous and unauthorized edition of her work, Gascoigne omitted this preface: "This booke was dedicated to Madame de Guise Abbesse of the monastery but because there was nothing in the epistle but civility & respect therfore it was not translated."⁶⁶ This remark reveals the practical orientation of Gascoigne's translation, which wastes no time on "civility & respect" but rather moves directly to Le Sergent's spiritual instruction. Agnes More, meanwhile, translated part of Jeanne

de Cambry's *Building of Divine Love* (*La ruine de l'amour propre et bâtiment de l'amour divin*, 1627). Like Gascoigne, More excises her source text's prefatory materials, including commendatory verses, de Cambry's preface to the reader, and a dedicatory preface to the Infanta Isabella. More also reshapes the text by omitting its first book, which discusses self-mortification. The manuscript's 1691 title page concludes with a description of the final chapters that emphasizes the mystical focus of the resulting translation: "The holy repose of the faithfull soul Spouse of Jesus Christ, wherein by a beatifying Love to her Spouse her Spirit being transformed into God & united to him, nature is annihilated by a divine martyrdom."⁶⁷ Both Gascoigne and More circulated their translations within the house rather than seeking a wider audience through print. At most, the Cambrai nuns shared their work with family members or other convents. Catherine Gascoigne and Clementia (Anne) Cary translated Baker's works into French for the convent of St. Lazare in Cambrai.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, Barbara Constable dedicated several manuscript translations to her sister and niece, but even she expected that her work would see limited circulation.⁶⁹

Yet the nuns at Cambrai were also well aware of translation's ability to publicize the spiritual methods associated with a particular order or institution. Baker's *Enquiry* defended Percy's authorship of the *Abridgment*, noting that "One of the Dames of This House, who then was of Brussels"—possibly Deacon—had vouched for her role as translator.⁷⁰ Furthermore, his *Catalogue* twice mentions Elizabeth Evelinge's *Admirable Life of S[aint] Catherine of Bologna*, which was associated with the Gravelines Poor Clares.⁷¹ Toby Matthew's translation of *A Treatise of Mental Prayer* (1627) by Alfonso Rodriguez, SJ, was also popular among some of the Cambrai nuns. Baker's *Enquiry* devotes considerable energy to demonstrating that this work's focus on Ignatian meditation made it unsuitable for a contemplative order: "[Rodriguez's] Book of Mentall Prayer, hath bin Sent to This House (viz, One from The Benedictines of Brussels, and Another from those of Gant) with Such Singular Commendations, as if there were none, but he. And Some in the House do Extoll it as Much: whereas, indeed, the Book is Even Nothing at all for the Purpose of that Spirit, which should be, and Reign, in This House, and throughout our Whole Order."⁷² While Baker does not identify the "Some" who "Extoll" this book, the nuns originally from Brussels, including Deacon, are probable candidates. Matthew's translation tacitly authorized the use of Jesuit practices in English monasteries through its connection to Abbess Lucy Knatchbull of the Ghent Benedictines. Knatchbull probably collaborated with Matthew—her spiritual director

and very likely a Jesuit himself—on the publication of his translation. John Wilson, overseer of the Jesuit press at Saint Omer, composed a dedicatory epistle for one version (STC 21148) that identifies Knatchbull as his source for the text: “I should have wronged this Excellent Treatise, had I directed the same, into any other, then your Ladshipps Hands, from whome I first received it; and to whome, by the Translatours Intention, and for many other respects, it is singularly due.”⁷³ Another version (STC 21149) features Matthew’s dedication of the translation to Knatchbull, which presents the work as evidence that Jesuits are unfairly maligned: “It will appeare to any indifferent honest eye, how unlikely it is, for the Religious men of this Order, to have any thing in them of that spirit, which either Heretikes, or Politikes, or other envious persons lay to their charg.”⁷⁴ Thanks to these prefaces, Matthew’s translation positioned the Ghent house as a haven for women interested in Ignatian piety. The Brussels and Ghent nuns who sent copies of this book to Cambrai may have hoped that Matthew’s translation could endorse Ignatian spirituality elsewhere. Deacon was therefore familiar with two powerful, if conflicting, models of the potential influence that translation could have on devotional practices inside and outside the cloister.

In 1632, Potentiana Deacon responded to a controversy over spiritual direction among the Cambrai Benedictines by publishing a translation of François de Sales that publicly associated her house with Ignatian piety. Originally a member of the Brussels Benedictines, in 1623 Deacon was one of three nuns—along with Frances Gawen and Viviana (Mary) Yaxley—sent to assist with the foundation of the Cambrai house. Deacon and Gawen were probably selected due to their conflicts with Abbess Mary Percy. A deep rift had arisen in the Brussels house after the 1622 appointment of Francis Ward as a second ordinary confessor intended to assist Robert Chambers.⁷⁵ Percy’s relationship with both Chambers and the house’s Jesuit confessors had already grown strained by this point, and her apparent favoring of Ward alienated many of the Brussels nuns. While a pro-Jesuit group led by Lucy Knatchbull left for Ghent in 1624, Deacon and Gawen were part of another faction that viewed Percy’s preference for Ward as a breach of monastic order. Deacon, for example, petitioned the archbishop of Mechelen more than ten times in 1623 on behalf of Chambers: “Mon humble request est, qu’il plairoit a vostre Seig[neu]rie de vouloir ainsy ordonné que Madame en des affaires de government suivre son advice, a fin que les choses puet [*sic*] estre bien dispose a L’honneur de dieu, et a nostre salut, reputations, et bien de nostre Monastre” (my humble request is that it will

please your Lordship to desire it to be so ordained that Madame follows his [Chambers's] advice in matters of governance, so that things can be well arranged for the honor of God and for our health, reputations, and the good of our Monastery).⁷⁶ Gawen sent similar complaints, eventually observing that "il seroit mieulx changer madame que de perdre Un pere Confesseur si juste, docte et de bonne conscience" (it would be better to change Madame than to lose a father Confessor so just, learned, and of good conscience).⁷⁷ The reasons for Yaxley's transfer are less clear as she had only professed in 1621 and did not petition the archbishop regarding Ward. While Gawen became abbess of the new community, Deacon served simultaneously as cellarer and novice mistress.⁷⁸ In this latter position, Deacon attempted to inspire her charges with the spirit of Ignatian devotion characteristic of the Brussels Benedictines. Deacon approved of the arrangement predating Ward's arrival, in which Chambers administered the sacraments while Jesuit priests instructed the house in meditation: "Fa[ther] Cham[bers] . . . ever would the fathers [of the Society] should direct for meditation, and the method for young ones [postulants] to practice it."⁷⁹ While Deacon and Gawen were not as strongly in favor of Ignatian piety as the founders of the Ghent house, they nonetheless had been trained according to this system and probably viewed Ignatian prayer as a natural component of monastic spirituality.

The Cambrai postulants, however, found Ignatian piety uncongenial to their spiritual progress, and their requests for additional direction led to the installation of Augustine Baker as the house's unofficial spiritual guide. As previously noted, in contrast with the prescribed exercises common to Ignatian prayer at the time, Baker held that individuals could reach mystical union with God by following their own particular calls to devotion.⁸⁰ While Yaxley appears to have adapted to this new spiritual environment, Deacon and Gawen found Baker's teachings irreconcilable with their previous spiritual training.⁸¹ After initially welcoming Baker, Deacon showed a disdain that influenced some of her charges: "The mistress [of novices] did likewise shew much esteem of him at the first; but shortly all [the postulants] fell off again for a time, upon their own and their mistress's new conceived dislike."⁸² The results of the house's 1629 election of a new abbess further suggest that Deacon and Gawen had little sympathy for Baker's methods. Rather than reelecting Gawen or choosing Deacon, the convent selected Catherine Gascoigne despite the fact that her young age required a special dispensation from Rome. By this point, the Cambrai nuns clearly preferred an abbess who supported the method that most of them followed. Nevertheless, these two spiritual models appear to have coexisted without outright acrimony during

this initial period. According to More, Deacon even sent her to Baker in 1625 in the hope that he might resolve her doubts over her vocation: “My Mystris advised me to go to Father Baker telling me that fowre or five in the howse had found good by him, and that at least it was no harm to try, and it would do me no harme though it did me no good; for he was a very grave man, and one that was much respected in the Congregation.”⁸³

Only after Francis Hull, OSB, arrived as official confessor in 1629 did these competing spiritual modes become a source of open hostility. Concerned that Baker’s influence limited his own rightful authority as the house’s appointed confessor, Hull encouraged the nuns to follow an Ignatian method of prayer distinct from Baker’s contemplative instructions. As Christina Brent later recalled, “The present Confes[sor] apprehending it to derogate from his Authority, that another should give instructions to some of those under his charge . . . began to speake to some of them as if they were not in a way of obedience, raysing by that occasion scruples & difficultties in them, & they comming to him he sought to direct them in a course of prayer according to his opinion.”⁸⁴ If Hull hoped to reinforce monastic order, he was not successful. More, for example, rejected the idea that Hull’s form of prayer was compatible with Baker’s mysticism: “Those instructions . . . do much seeme to be like the Jesuits as I gather by their books, yet I hold them to be nothing so intelligible as theirs, but more confused by reason he would bring these, and Fa[ther] Bakers into one, & make a compleat life for a soul out of both.”⁸⁵ Besides refusing to follow Hull’s method of prayer, Baker’s adherents reworked the convent’s schedule to find additional time for prayer, a strategy approved by Baker himself, as More acknowledged: “What was allowed by Fa[ther] Baker concerning shifting to get time and meanes for our prayer, was but in case that Superiors did account it but an unprofitable exercise.”⁸⁶ The “Superior” in question here was obviously Hull, who was opposed to extending the nuns’ time for prayer. In 1632, Hull brought Baker before the English Benedictine Congregation on charges of heresy and anti-authoritarianism, alleging that Baker’s supporters refused to accept the authority of superiors who did not share Baker’s views: “They have this Doctrin amongst them, that so much respect and Obedience is not to be given to Vicarius, Abbesse, or other Superior, that is not a Contemplative person.”⁸⁷ While the congregation absolved Baker of wrongdoing in 1633, it also attempted to prevent further discord by removing both Baker and Hull from the house.

Since the leaders of the Cambrai convent put their energy toward preserving Baker’s writings, little direct evidence remains of the spiritual

views of Baker's opponents aside from Hull's complaint. Deacon's translation of de Sales thus offers a rare glimpse of the way that the minority faction within the convent used literature to advance Ignatian practices. Hull claimed that Baker's writings bred factionalism within the convent: "There must be a kinde of spirituall Confederacie, league, or freindship [*sic*] among those of his followers, together with communication of Bookes and Doctrins, different from the rest; which cannot but be perceaved by the others; and consequentlie breed partialitie, disaffections, and murmurs."⁸⁸ Deacon and Gawen were probably among these "others," given their apparent disinterest in Baker's methods and their preference for Ignatian piety. After their experiences at Brussels, Deacon and Gawen must have felt a disquieting sense of *déjà vu* as their abbess seemed to support another priest over the house's appointed confessor. Yet if Baker's adherents had their special books, so did his opponents. Contemporary sources report that Hull wrote meditations and instructions for the Cambrai nuns, and Baker's tangential rebuttal of one such tract in his *Life and Death of Dame Gertrude More* may suggest the popularity of Hull's work.⁸⁹ As previously noted, Baker also objected to the enthusiasm that some nuns showed for Matthew's translation of Rodriguez. Deacon's translation of de Sales's *Delicious Entertainments of the Soule* (*Les vrayes entretiens spirituels du bien-heureux*, 1629) was yet another expression of this minority viewpoint. Much as Percy had done, Deacon translated a source text that supported her own spiritual methods even as it appealed to members of her house who had no interest in Ignatian spirituality. In publishing her translation in 1632, Deacon ambitiously attempted to influence public views of her convent by suggesting that the Cambrai nuns followed the more active philosophy advocated by Hull rather than the contemplative mysticism of Baker.

Within the immediate context of the Cambrai convent, Deacon's translation of de Sales participated in the tradition of spiritual reading promoted by both Baker and his opponents. When Deacon's translation saw print in 1632, she noted that she had composed the work "for her private employment & instruction; never intending more then the use of a particular cloister."⁹⁰ This statement was not just a display of false modesty; Baker's *Catalogue* (c. 1630–32) indicates that the work was extant "in written hande" before its publication.⁹¹ Given her role as novice mistress, Deacon may have found the text appealing due to its instruction on the fundamentals of convent life, yet her translation also offered an alternative view of Salesian spirituality that was based on Ignatian methods rather than mysticism. Baker recommends that the Cambrai nuns read both the *Delicious Entertainments* and de Sales's

Traité de l'amour de Dieu, in either its French original (1616) or its English translation (*Treatise of the Love of God*, 1630). De Sales addressed this latter work “to soules that are advanced in devotion,” particularly the order that he and Jeanne de Chantal had founded: the Sisters of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin, or Visitandines.⁹² This explicitly mystical text presented advanced prayer as a personalized and private discourse with God, a viewpoint congruent with Baker’s ideal of contemplation: “Praier, and mysticall Divinite are one same thing,” so that “there is nothing saied in it betwixt God and the soule, save onely from heart to heart by a communication incommunicable to all, but themselves.”⁹³ *Delicious Entertainments* had a similar origin, as the Visitandines had transcribed de Sales’s conferences, or familiar addresses, from memory. Baker therefore probably viewed this work as a source of additional guidance on mysticism.

Yet Deacon’s preface to the printed version of her translation reveals that she was drawn to *Les vrays entretiens* out of her preference for Ignatian piety. Deacon presents the *Delicious Entertainments* as a continuation of de Sales’s *Introduction to a Devoute Life*: “If thou like & love not the Introduction to a Devout Life, composed by the same Byshop, I should call thy devotion into question; if thou approve and applaud it (as all truely devout doe) thou shall find that this after-borne fruct is but as it were a supplement, or explication thereof” (DE, A3r). The *Entertainments* might seem to be a “supplement” to the *Introduction* because de Sales refers to this latter work twice in the *Entertainments*.⁹⁴ In the preface to the *Introduction*, however, de Sales states that he composed this treatise specifically for secular readers: “Those that have treated of devotion before me, have allmost all attended onely to the instruction of persons alltogether retired from worldly conversation. . . . But my intention is particularly and principally to instruct such as live in cities and townes, busied with the affaires of their houshold, or forced by their place and calling to folow their princes court; such as by the obligation of their estate, are bound to take a common course of life in outward shew.”⁹⁵ De Sales had been strongly influenced by Jesuit spiritual directors, and the *Introduction*—translated into English in 1613—offers Ignatian methods of prayer that are appropriate for the active life, including structured meditations and contemplation of biblical mysteries.⁹⁶ Unsurprisingly, Baker found the *Introduction* less appropriate for mysticism, recommending that the Cambrai nuns read only selections: “in the 4th parte, the 13th Chapter and thence to the end of the 4th parte, being concerning desolations.”⁹⁷ Deacon’s presentation of the work as “a supplement” to de Sales’s *Introduction* suggests that she was

primarily interested in the ways that the active spirituality of the *Introduction* might apply to the cloister. Her claim that “all truly devout” share an enthusiasm for this work may even covertly criticize Baker and his supporters.

In its printed form, Deacon’s translation evoked the Ignatian nature of de Sales’s piety and, in turn, suggested that the Cambrai convent approved of Jesuit methods. Deacon and her allies cannily sought out Gheerart Pinchon, the Flemish printer who had recently published de Sales’s mystical treatise *Of the Love of God*. Yet the title page of *Delicious Entertainments* conveys the work’s Ignatian associations through a woodcut of the Jesuit insignia IHS below a cross and above a heart pierced by three nails (see figure 8). This woodcut seems especially significant as it does not recur in any of Pinchon’s other English publications, perhaps indicating that Deacon or her collaborators requested this image.⁹⁸ The title page implicitly connects the Cambrai nuns with this symbol of Ignatian spirituality by attributing the work to “a Dame of our Ladies of comfort of the order of S[aint] Bennet in Cambray,” allowing Deacon to serve as an anonymous representative of her convent. Deacon’s dedicatory preface to the “Christian and religious reader,” invoking both secular and cloistered audiences, further associates the unknown translator with her house: “If in perusing this translated treatise of sound doctrine and solide documents, thou meet with some faults . . . know that . . . the translatresse [was] a woman, that had not much skille in the Frenche, but why did shee then undertake it? wilt thou say, truly for her private imployment & instruction; never intending more then the use of a particular cloister, though God and her superiours have otherwise disposed of it; & exposed it to the publiek view of the world” (*DE*, A2r). Deacon could have refrained from identifying herself as a member of a specific institution much as Percy had done, but instead she emphasizes the translation’s origins to present the work as characteristic of her house’s piety. While Deacon’s compliance with her superiors’ decision to publish the book demonstrates a praiseworthy conformity to monastic obedience, the superiors’ interest in the book further strengthens the impression that the spirituality of the *Delicious Entertainments* is characteristic of the convent’s practices. Considering that the conflict over Baker’s instructions centered on alleged insubordination to Hull, Deacon’s claim that the will of God is manifested through her superiors is particularly pointed. These superiors were probably not Gascoigne or Baker—both of whom showed no interest in publishing their own translations—but rather Hull and other members of the English Benedictine Congregation opposed to Baker. The 1632 publication of Deacon’s

DELICIOUS
ENTERTAINMENTS
OF THE SOVLE:
WRITTEN BY

THE HOLY AND MOST REVEREND
LORD FRANCIS DE SALES,
BISHOP AND PRINCE OF
GENEVA.

*Translated by a Dame of our Ladies
of comfort of the order of S. Bennet
in Cambray.*



Imprinted at DOVAY,
By GHEERART PINSON, vnde
the signe of Cuclen. 1632.

Figure 8. Title page of *Delicious Entertainments of the Soule* (1632), Potentiana Deacon's translation of François de Sales. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

translation was therefore a collaborative effort between Deacon and her Benedictine superiors to reshape the convent's spiritual reputation. Even as the English Benedictine Congregation launched an official investigation into the Cambrai convent's spiritual practices, Deacon's translation publicly suggested that the house practiced the active spirituality rejected by Baker and the majority of the Cambrai nuns.

Deacon's preface also attempts to redress any damage to the house's reputation caused by its ongoing discord over spirituality. Deacon presents the *Entertainments* as an authoritative glimpse into cloistered piety that can counteract potential objections to monastic life: "If any illwillers of Catholike religion, & ill-wishers of a religious vocation come to the view of this booke, they may see the lives, Rules, vertues, & customes, of Religious families disciphered without passion or partiality, & admire with what charity, discretion, devotion, & humility they passe over the pilgrimage of this mortall & miserable life" (*DE*, Å3r-Å3v). By revealing "the lives, Rules, vertues, & customes, of Religious families . . . without passion or partiality," the *Delicious Entertainments* offers both a defense of and a template for monastic life. Deacon nevertheless admits that sometimes religious institutions fall short of this ideal:

And if perchance some scandals arrive amongst them by the meanes of some wolves or foxes in sheep-skins, I meane by some false brethren & Apostates, it is not to be attributed to the Orders & ordination of holy Church or Religious institution, but to the malice of satan & humane frailtie, for never yett since the Church began, was it free from scandals, and false brethren & Apostats, nor never will it be untill the worlds end; yett cursed are they that voluntarily blow & kindle the fire of faction or division in the house of God, or that adde fewel unto it to continew it, & blessed are the peaceable, humble, and innocent spirits that are proved & purified ther-in. (*DE*, Å3v)

This charged evocation of "faction or division in the house of God" likely comments on the rift among the Cambrai nuns. While a few "false brethren" who appear holy—possibly Baker and his adherents—encourage "the fire of faction or division in the house," those nuns who exemplify monastic virtues such as peacefulness and humility achieve true sanctity as they are "proved & purified ther-in." Deacon self-righteously suggests that Hull's supporters will only reap spiritual advancement from their trials. At the same time, she frames her translation as a source of guidance that could resolve monastic discord: "I dare boldly say, that whosoever

will follow really & cordially the spirit of this Author & booke, hee shall live in peace with God, with his neighbour, & with himself" (*DE*, Å3v–Å4r). Within the house, Deacon's preface might have served as a condemnation of Baker's faction, yet the *Delicious Entertainments* also suggested that Ignatian methods were a pattern for monastic harmony and devotion at Cambrai and beyond.

Even though Deacon's translation is generally so faithful that she uses English cognates for French terms wherever possible, she does subtly reshape the text to endorse Hull's views on spiritual direction. The Visitandines traditionally sought guidance from Jesuit confessors, and the *Delicious Entertainments* accordingly had an implicitly Ignatian basis that might seem to offer support for Hull and his followers.⁹⁹ For example, de Sales encourages even the most advanced souls to use the examination of conscience recommended by the *Spiritual Exercises*: "The spirituall lovers, spouses of the celestiall king, truely doe viewe themselves, from time to time as Doves who are neere the most pure waters: to see if they bee well accommodated to the liking of their Lover, and this is performed in the examens of their Conscience, whereby they cleanse, purifie, and adorne themselves" (*DE*, 192). Baker, however, objected to Ignatian self-examination, and Hull had complained that he advised the Cambrai nuns "to make Riddances of Examins."¹⁰⁰ Deacon's own support for this practice is evident in her slight modification of another passage discussing self-examination: "We ought to accustome our selves, to *examine diligently* [rechercher] the successe of our perfection, according to the ordinarie waies" (*DE*, 120 [vere 150]; *Lve*, 344). By translating "rechercher" (to seek diligently) as "examine diligently," Deacon adds an allusion to examination of conscience that strengthens the underlying Ignatianism of her source text. Similarly, Baker disapproved of Ignatian meditation because it stirred intellectual faculties that might impede contemplation. De Sales notes that some souls are "drawne to a certayne sweete simplicitie, which houldeth them in great tranquillitie before God" (*DE*, 290), a method of affective prayer reminiscent of Baker's contemplative ideal. Nevertheless, de Sales also views Ignatian meditation on the mysteries of Christ's life as the foundation of monastic prayer: "Generallie speaking, we ought to provide that all the sisters begin by the methode of prayer, which is the most sure, & which carrieth them to the reformation of life and manners, which is . . . made about the mysteries of the Life and death of our Lord; there wee walke in securitie. Therefore wee ought to apply our selves *sweetlie and simply* [à la bonne foy] about our Maister to learne that which hee would wee should doe, and likewise those that can use their imagination ought to

doe it” (*DE*, 290–91; *Lve*, 680). Interestingly, Deacon suggests a parity between affective and Ignatian prayer by translating “à la bonne foy” (in good faith) with the doublet “sweetlie and simply,” thus echoing de Sales’s description of the “sweete simplicitie” practiced by those suited for contemplation. Not only did the *Delicious Entertainments* sanction the role of Ignatian piety within a monastic context, but Deacon’s translation carefully reiterates this idea.

Deacon also underscores an antimystical streak within the *Delicious Entertainments*, especially de Sales’s censure of nuns who questioned their confessors’ directions—a condemnation with obvious relevance to the dispute at Cambrai. De Sales explicitly refuses to discuss contemplative prayer within the *Entertainments*: “But for other kinds of prayer more elevated, unlesse that God send them absolutelie, I praye you that you undertake them not of your selfe, and without the advise of those who guide you” (*DE*, 292). De Sales addresses the need for spiritual guides in more detail in the third conference on Jesus’s flight to Egypt, arguing that the sisters must follow their directors just as Mary and Joseph obeyed Gabriel’s command to flee to Egypt without hesitation:

It is a *strange* [*grand*] case of mans spiritt that will not be brought to adore the secrett mysteries of God, and his most holy will, if it have not some kind of knowlege, wherefore this or wherefore that. I have a better spiritt, (say they, *in praise of themselves* [de soy]) more experience, and the like goodlie reasons, that are proper for nothing else then to produce unquietnesse, inconstant humours; and murmours? . . . *These spirits truely are greatly to be pittied.* [Grand pitié!] Assoone as we give our selves over to search narrowlye into everie thing that we see done; *Alas* [added] what doe we not, for to loose the tranquillitie of our harts? Wee ought not to seeke any other reason, but that God will have it so, and that must suffice; but who *shall, or will assure* me [m’asseurera], that this is the will of God, say they? (*DE*, 44–45; *Lve*, 93)

Deacon’s alterations to this passage emphasize the unhappy plight of these presumptuous souls. By translating “grand” (great) as “strange,” Deacon suggests that this desire to question spiritual directors is unusual, painting insubordination to superiors as a sign of unorthodoxy. She also shows psychological insight into the delusions of grandeur that prompt this behavior by rendering “de soy” (of themselves) as “in praise of themselves,” a change that implies these souls lack proper monastic humility. Deacon stresses their subsequent inability to comply with superiors

through her translation of “m’asseurera” (will assure me) as “who shall, or will assure me.” Yet she balances this heightened critique by displaying a compassionate concern over the consequences of this behavior. First, Deacon expands upon de Sales’s exclamatory phrase “Grand pitié” (Great pity), both intensifying this interjection and specifying its referent: “These spirits truly are greatly to be pittied.” Second, she inserts “Alas” before de Sales’s comment “what doe we not, for to loose the tranquillitie of our hearts,” adding a sense of mourning for the loss of spiritual peace that accompanies such rebellion. By underscoring the pathos of these erroneous souls, Deacon’s translation warns readers against falling into this trap and subtly critiques the freedom associated with Baker’s approach to spiritual direction.

Deacon’s translation also addresses the issues of monastic governance that had prompted the discord between Baker and Hull, as the third conference continues with a condemnation of souls who prefer to indulge in an unsupervised mysticism rather than rely upon spiritual directors. Hull claimed that Baker’s adherents believed “they maie follow their Divin Call, and disobey . . . a Superior.”¹⁰¹ De Sales’s treatise could be taken as evidence for Hull’s contention that obedience to superiors was essential to achieving spiritual progress: “We would peradventure be taught and instructed by God hymselfe, by way of extasies, or ravishments, and visions, and I know not what like *childish fopperies* [niaiseries], that we frame in our spiritts, rather then submitt ourselves, to the *assured* [commune] and most amiable way of *true & holy* [une sainte] submission, to the government of those, whome God hath *placed to direct us* [nous a donné], and the observance and direction aswell of our Rules as of our superiours” (*DE*, 45; *Lve*, 94). If de Sales suggested that such disregard for directors threatened the monastic order intended by the Visitandines’ “Rules,” Deacon emphasizes the hierarchical relationship between penitents and their directors by rendering “nous a donné” (whom God has given us) as “whome God hath placed to direct us.” The addition of the phrase “to direct” presents the traditional confessor-penitent relationship as a divinely appointed institution, counteracting Baker’s claim that the nuns could disregard superiors who did not seem to further their progress. Deacon also suggests that “submission” to superiors is the only foolproof means of spiritual advancement by translating “commune” (common) as “assured” and “une sainte” (one holy) with the doublet “true & holy.” Furthermore, Deacon’s rendering of “niaiseries” (stupidities) as “childish fopperies” neatly captures the implications of childishness and silliness attached to this French term, emphasizing the immaturity of those who hope to rely on mystic revelation alone. Since

Deacon's translation legitimizes the traditional relationship between confessor and penitent as a sign of monastic order, it might seem to endorse Hull's views of confession and to suggest that Cambrai eschewed the mysticism associated with Baker.

Finally, the *Delicious Entertainments* offered a model of monastic order based on obedience, which may explain Hull's interest in publishing the work. Indeed, in his 1632 complaint Hull suggested that obedience could resolve the house's discord: "order must be taken to supresse or moderate this Doctrin of Divin Call, and that of Obedience more published and protected."¹⁰² One of Hull's major concerns was that Baker's ideas might encourage the nuns to "neglect, carelesly or willfullie transgresse, or disesteeme the Rule, Statutes, ordinances and commands."¹⁰³ In contrast, de Sales warns against deliberate infringement of monastic rules by comparing those who eat outside of prescribed meals due to a sudden passion with those who do so in order to be disobedient: "*they who sinn through neglect, or disesteeme* [qui mange par mespris] of the Rule, and by disobedience; they *will and intend* [veut] the same disobedience, in such sorte that they doe not the worke, nor would doe it, if they weare not moved to doe it by *the will and pourpose* [la volonté] they have to disobey. The one then disobeyeth, *willing and intending* [voulant] that to the which disobedience is joyned, the other disobeyeth *willing and pourposing* [voulant] the same thing because disobedience is conjoyned ther unto" (*DE*, 3; *Lve*, 5). Deacon transforms this exemplum into a broader critique of monastic disobedience by translating "qui mange par mespris" (who eat by contempt) as "they who sinn through neglect, or disesteeme." Her consistent use of doublets for "veut," "la volonté," and "voulant" (all forms of "will") suggests that the "intent" or "purpose" of these actions is of paramount importance, obliquely censuring those who deliberately break monastic order—as Baker's adherents seemed to do in their dismissal of Hull. Likewise, de Sales advocates for total compliance with a superior's spiritual instructions even if they are unhelpful: "it is intirelie necessarie, that wee subject our though[t]s to certayne objects; in such sort, that when *our superiour doth give us sett exercises* [on nous marque des exercices], or practice of vertue, wee remayne in those exercises, and submitt our spirit" (*DE*, 147; *Lve*, 336). Deacon's rendering of "on nous marque des exercices" (we are appointed some exercises) transforms this injunction into authorization for Hull's position, as she omits de Sales's impersonal phrasing in order to specify the source of these "exercises": the "superiour." Furthermore, Deacon gives this guidance a subtly Ignatian orientation by adding in the modifier "sett," which opposes the inherent liberty of Baker's model. Readers

aware of the disputes at Cambrai might thus have taken the *Delicious Entertainments* as an implicit critique of Baker's adherents, who resisted Hull's authority and purposely created monastic disobedience.

As these changes suggest, both the manuscript and print versions of Deacon's translation emerged from the ongoing dissension over spiritual practices at Cambrai. Having already experienced a similar controversy at Brussels, Deacon translated a work supporting her belief that monastic order hinged on obedience to appointed confessors. While Deacon's alterations may be subtle, they nevertheless heighten the relevance of de Sales's text to the situation at Cambrai by playing up his emphasis on monastic order, his rejection of unsupervised mysticism, and his endorsement of Ignatian methods. Ironically, Baker himself recommended that his adherents read Deacon's translation, perhaps unaware of its implicit suggestion that the Cambrai nuns should submit to Hull's authority. More important, the 1632 publication of the *Delicious Entertainments* boldly positioned the text as representative of the house's spirituality, suggesting that the Cambrai Benedictines practiced an Ignatian style of devotion similar to other English Benedictine houses. As a result, the *Delicious Entertainments* tried to reframe the convent's reputation among English Catholics by distancing the house from the mysticism espoused by Baker. Deacon may have ultimately failed in her attempt to undercut Baker's influence at Cambrai, but the possible success of Deacon's synecdochic authorship is shown by later critical assumptions that Agnes More translated this work despite its bias against mysticism. While these critics accepted Deacon's contention that the work was emblematic of Cambrai's spirituality, they nevertheless associated her text with the very majority whose influence she hoped to challenge.

Conclusions

The printed translations of Mary Percy and Potentiana Deacon reveal the ways that anonymity could allow a member of a well-defined religious group to stand for the larger spiritual community. Both women used anonymous translation for polemical purposes, attempting to suggest that their source texts' endorsements of Ignatianism represented the mainstream practices of English monasticism. Percy's version of Berinzaga and Gagliardi's mystical treatise offered a model for incorporating hallmarks of Ignatian piety, such as indifference and discernment, into monastic contemplation. In the context of the recent disputes over Jesuit influence among the Brussels Benedictines, Percy's translation argued

for the validity of Ignatian spirituality within a monastic setting and furthermore implied that these methods enhanced monastic order. By dedicating the work to other English religious and hinting at her membership within this community, Percy suggested that the Ignatian piety of the *Abridgment of Christian Perfection* was representative of English monasticism writ large. Well aware of Percy's *Abridgment*, Deacon used a similar strategy in response to conflicts over spirituality among the Cambrai Benedictines. She heightened the Ignatian undertones of the *Delicious Entertainments*, urging the Cambrai Benedictines to comply with their appointed superior despite his hostility to their form of prayer. The anonymous publication of Deacon's translation appeared to represent the Cambrai house itself and consequently implied that the convent followed Hull's methods.

The authorial implications of these anonymous works are helpful in rethinking critical assumptions about early modern women's publication strategies. From a feminist vantage point, anonymity might seem to be a form of cooperation with proscriptions on women's public speech and consequently a sign of compliance with patriarchal oppression. Yet, as these examples have shown, anonymity could be a potent form of authorship. Deacon and Percy submerged their individual identities within their religious communities, transforming their publications from the work of one nun into representations of English monasticism. In keeping with their monastic vows, Deacon and Percy demonstrated a praiseworthy modesty that only enhanced the authority of their translations as the product of the cloister. These case studies indicate that anonymity was not always just a means of hiding the translators' identities or of privileging the original authors of their source texts. Rather, anonymity allowed Deacon and Percy to link their religious affiliations with the agendas of their translations. The immediate contexts of their translations further reveal the potency of this synecdochic authorship. Both women collaborated with male confessors—Hull and Hoskins, respectively—to publish works that promoted their shared view of monastic spirituality, actively championing spiritual preferences that were controversial within their houses and disliked by their superiors. Anonymity thus allowed these translators to legitimize their spiritual practices and to offer them as a model of piety to both religious and secular readers. As these attempts to shape public views of English monasticism suggest, anonymity could be a form of authorship that was both subversive and assertive in its own right.

