

CAMBRAI'S IMPRINT ON THE LIFE OF LADY FALKLAND

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LADY FALKLAND HER LIFE, the biography written at Cambrai in the 1640s by one of Lady Falkland's daughters, describes her devotion to the English Benedictine Congregation as 'most especiall' and 'most peculiar.'¹ She was converted by a Benedictine priest, Father Dunstan Pettinger, in November 1626, and her confessors and chaplains until her death in 1639 – Fathers Cuthbert Fursden, Benet Price, Placid Gascoigne, and John Meutisse – were Benedictines. At least fourteen Benedictine priests are named in *Life* and related documents as having assisted the Falkland family in London, Paris, Cambrai, Douai, and Rome.

Whilst *Life* is our primary source for Lady Falkland's relationship with the EBC, the relationship is attested by several other documents, whose discrepancies and characterisations remind us that sources for Lady Falkland's life must be interpreted as carefully as they were written. A classic example of this is a letter from the Puritan vicar Alexander Cook to Archbishop James Ussher, written immediately after Lady Falkland's conversion. He describes Pettinger in quite uncomplimentary terms:

One of the priests who perverted her goeth under the name of Fitz Gerard, though his true name is George Pettinger, a Yorkshire man, an idle prating companion, and a serving-man not many years ago: a frequenter of bawdy-houses, and a cozener of tradesmen in London.²

In stark contrast, Lady Falkland writes of this same priest, who was arrested in her house, as well reputed, euen among protestants, for hee bath procured, mr williams, and mr ward, two of the best goldsmiths in cheapeside, to be his bayle, and I dare bee bound, there was neuer better bayle, offered for any catholike.³

There are also varying interpretations of the extent of Lady Falkland's interaction with her Benedictine priests. While Lord Falkland's agent in England, Leonard Welstead, informs the Lord Deputy of Ireland that 'my Lady keeps a plentifull Table att hir Lodginges in drury Lane where hir Ladyshipps dayly guesstes are 2 Priestes with other Romish Catholiques'⁴, Lady Falkland tells a different story to her husband:

You chardge me with feedeing Preests and Jesuists; for Jesuists, To my knoledge, I neuer saw the face of one in my lyef, nor intend not to doe. For Preests, it is true, I must haue conversed with some, els I could not haue beene, what for noe death I will deny my self to be. For feedeing them, it is possible some one man may haue dined or supped heere sum tymes, but yf there weare a bitt the more; or yf I euer appointed any thing, but only satt downen to such as they prouided, I wil be subject to your displeasure.⁵

1 Barry Weller and Margaret Ferguson, eds., *The Tragedy of Mariam the Fair Queen of Jewry with The Lady Falkland her Life by one of her Daughters* (Berkeley, 1994) 271, 204. While page references are from this edition (hereafter referred to as *Life*), the quotations use the manuscript spelling (Lille 20H9).

2 *The whole works of James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh*, vol. 15, ed C.R. Elrington (Dublin, 1864) p.356

3 State Papers, Domestic, 16/79/76.

4 British Library, Sloane ins. 3827, f. 118.

5 State Papers, Ireland, 63/243/515.2. 6 BL Add. ins. 15390, ff. 15 1-2.

And while *Life* is silent about Lady Falkland's ill-fated plan to move to Rome with her six Catholic children in 1637, we learn from letters between George Con, papal agent in England, to Secretary Ferragalli, Cardinal Barberini's secretary in Rome, that Lady Falkland (described as 'lunatica') must be dissuaded from her plan by her Benedictine confessors.⁶ In 1637, her confessors would have been Price, Fursden, or Gascoigne. They were evidently successful in their dissuading, since Lady Falkland never went to Rome. However, shortly afterwards, her daughters arrived at Cambrai, which Price had helped found, and of which Placid Gascoigne's sister, Catherine, was currently Abbess. At the same time, Lady Falkland arranged for Patrick to move from Paris to Rome, where he was taken under the wing of Father Wilfrid Selby.

In my doctoral thesis *The Life and Letters of Elizabeth, Lady Falkland* I argue that the *Life* cannot be properly edited or understood outside its Benedictine context. Neither the 1861 edition by Richard Simpson, liberal Catholic and co-owner/editor of the *Rambler*, nor the 1994 edition by Margaret Ferguson and Barry Weller, under the auspices of the Women Writer's Project, accurately represent the many marginal and interlinear additions and deletions to the text made by various members of the Falkland family, which in turn contribute to our interpretation of the text. My paper today takes *Life* back to its Cambrai roots, suggesting that the recovery of scribal activity at Cambrai can lead to an overall reevaluation of *Life*'s authorship and dating, and discussing why it might have been written in the first place.

The precise nature of the *Life* has given scholars of Lady Falkland much pause for thought, and has led many into unresolved contradictions and confusion. In their attempts to recreate the life and times of Lady Falkland, they have relied heavily on the *Life* written by one of her daughters; at the same time, these scholars are quick to claim that this biography is inherently unreliable. Disclaimers abound: in 1940, Kurt Weber urged that a 'proper discount' be made on the biography because of its pious influences. Both Elaine Beilin and Barbara Lewalski agree that our understanding of Lady Falkland's lived life is 'complicated' by the hagiographical nature of the written *Life*.⁷ I believe that these so-called 'discounts' and 'complications,' so vexing to literary scholars, become useful clues when one tries to reconstruct the production of *Life*. *Life* is a literary text as well as an historical document, and needs to be treated as such. Rather than trawl *Life* for inaccuracies and misrepresentations, we need to look at what they tell us about the production of *Life* at Cambrai.

Dame Clementia is usually cited as *Life*'s author, but the reasoning behind this⁸ attribution is dubious.⁸ The most detailed case for attribution comes from Donald Foster, who asserts that 'it is clear from a collation of the internal and external evidence that the biography cannot have been written by anyone but Anne Cary.' He adds that besides *Life*, Dame Clementia 'preserved many, perhaps all, of her mother's writings,' citing as evidence Colwich MS 36, which 'appears almost certainly to be the English translation of Blosius that Elizabeth Cary was working on

6 BL Add. ins. 15390, ff. 15 1-2.

7 Elaine Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the English Renaissance* (Princeton, 1987) p.158; Barbara Lewalski, *Writing Women of Jacobean England* (Cambridge, MA, 1993) p.180.

8 Lewalski *op.cit.* P.180, and n.9 (probably Anne, maybe Lucy); Isobel Grundy, 'Women's history' Writing by English Nuns' in *Women, Writing, History: 1640-1740*, eds. Grundy and Susan Wiseman (London, 1992) p.126 (Anne, maybe Mary); Diane Purkiss, *Renaissance Women: The Plays of Elizabeth Cary & the Poems of Aemilia Lanyer* (London, 1994), p.ix (Mary); Weller and Ferguson, *op.cit.*, 1-2, 51-53, (maybe Anne, maybe Lucy, maybe neither).

during her last months.’⁹ Dame Clementia is indeed one of the transcribers of the Blossius manuscript cited by Foster, and she inscribes the *ex libris*; but there are at least three other scribes that contribute to the manuscript as well, including Dame Justina Gascoigne. And the manuscript is not ‘almost certainly’ Lady Falkland’s translation; rather, it is a transcription of Father Augustine Baker’s translation of a selection of Blossius’ works.¹⁰

Life is currently identified by literary scholars as a c.1655 copy of a manuscript originally written between 1643 (after the death of Lucius) and 1650 (before the death of Dame Magdalena).¹¹ However, since the manuscript contains corrections in the hand of Patrick Cary, the c.1655 dating must be incorrect. In 1655, Patrick was Protestant, married, living in Ireland, and had the first of three children.¹² He most likely made his corrections to the text in 1650, either before or after a trial noviciate at Douai (May to September, 1650).

If the manuscript *Lifr* was not written in 1655, when was it written? *Life*’s references to events in the 1640s allow us to date it more precisely, transporting the reader from the life of Lady Falkland, who died in 1639, to war-torn England and Flanders. For example, *Life* notes Dr Benjamin Laney’s chaplaincy to Charles I, ‘Docter Lany my lord Newburghs Chaplaine, since the Kings,’ an appointment made in late January 1644/5.¹³ It also mentions Walter Montague’s defence of Catholicism and Charles I ‘for which he hath now the honer to suffer,’ providing a handy end date for the writing of *Life*, since Montague, arrested in October 1643, remained a prisoner until July 1647. Assuming his ‘suffering’ refers to his imprisonment, then we can infer that *Life* was completed before July 1647, and for the rest of this paper I will refer to it as having been written c.1646.¹⁴

9 Donald Foster, ‘Resurrecting the Author,’ in *Privileging Gender in early modern England*, ed. Jean Brink (Kirkville, MO, 1993) 145-146, n. 8.

10 Colwich Abbey, MS 36, *Sacellum Animae Fidelis* and *Margaritum Spirituale* (extracts), *A Spiritual Table, Fire-Steel of Divine Love, Of the Infinite Love of God, and A Compound of Instructions*.

11 Foster, Beilin, Lewalski, and Weller and Ferguson all accept the c.1655 dating.

12 Patrick had lived in Rome from 1638 until 1649, when his pensions expired. He visited Great Tew in September 1649, and was in Brussels March 1650. His noviciate at Douai was not successful, and he returned to England in September 1650. He married the niece of his sister Victoria’s husband, Sir William Uvedale c. 1651. He was admitted to Lincoln’s Inn on February 10, 1651/2, and received his first appointment in Ireland in 1653. His first son was born October 1654. He died in Dublin March 1656/7. For details of Patrick’s life, see Pamela Willetts, ‘Patrick Cary and his Italian Poems.’ *British Library Journal* 2.2 (1976) 109-120; Willetts, ‘Patrick Cary: a Sequel,’ *British Library Journal* 4.2 (1978) 148-160; and Sister Veronica Delany, *The Poems of Patrick Cary* (Oxford, 1978).

13 SPD 16/521/36, May 3, 1625, from Lord Conway to the master and fellows of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, informs them that Sir Edward Barrett (later Lord Newburgh, uncle to the Cary sisters) had been appointed Resident ambassador in France, and desired to take Laney as his household chaplain. Barrett never took up the post, however.

14 *Life* 269; Elsie Duncan-Jones cites his release date from the Tower as 31 August, 1649, but this was the date he was exiled from England (‘Two Members of the Falkland Family, Victoria and Henry Cary,’ *Notes and Queries*, September 1955, 470, n.8).

LIFE'S MOVEMENTS

The manuscript of *Life* was part of the library of Our Lady of Comfort, Cambrai, until 18 October 1793, when the French Republic seized their monastery on rue des Anglaises as part of the revolutionary purge of foreigners. Dame Ann Teresa Partington's narrative of this calamity, written in 1796, reveals that the nuns were ordered that they 'should be totally out of their house in half a quarter of an hour and that they should take neither Trunk nor Box with them.' They were 'only allowed each one of them a small bundle.'¹⁵

Life did not make it into anyone's bundle. It was most likely removed to the damp Chapel of the Virgin at the church of St. Aubert, where it awaited placement in the newly-established Musée de Cambrai.¹⁶ The museum's director, 'le Citoyen Pierre Joseph Houillon,' was ordered to collect 'des livres, tableaux et autres objets interessants' from the confiscated goods of the numerous Cambrai monasteries and private non-citizens to form the base of the collection.¹⁷ Houillon had plenty of items from which to choose. Our Lady of Comfort's confiscated belongings, according to the Stanbrook Annals, included a library of 'about 1000 volumes,' 100 'very valuable' volumes in the Confessor's apartment, and 'a small collection of useful Books' in the Abbess' apartment.¹⁸ The catalogue of this collection, made by French officials in the early years of the republic, lists only a handful of 17c. manuscripts.¹⁹ Very few listed items are now extant, since almost the entire collection of manuscripts in the Musée de Cambrai was destroyed when the Hôtel de Ville burned down during World War I.²⁰ One of the manuscripts listed in this French Revolution catalogue is 'The writings of the most religious dame D. Magdalena Cary de St. Cruce professed religious of the most holy order of St Benedict. In quarto (car. mod).'²¹ And a catalogue of manuscripts from the Paris community lists a 'little book of collections of Dame Magdalene Cary.'²² As I will argue, it is highly likely that these writings include the *Lady Falkland Her Life*.

15 'Records of the English Benedictines Nuns at Cambrai (now Stanbrook),' in Catholic Record Society, *Records* 13 (1913) 21. The community was imprisoned for eighteen months, during which time many of them died. The rest returned to England in 1796.

16 A 1796 letter states that confiscated books from various monasteries were locked in the Chapel of the Virgin by 'Le citoyen Maker,' who refused to give up the keys. In year 6 of the Republic (1799) these documents were still in the chapel, and in danger of ruin (Lille MS L4870).

17 Lille MS L4873. Letters from the Minister of the Interior in Paris designated him as 'Commissaire bibliographe de Cambrai'; he is also referred to as the 'bibliothécaire et conservateur du Musée de Cambrai.' The museum's foundation was based on an order in 1796 from the 'Commission Exécutive de l'Instruction Publique, Bureau des Musée.'

18 A document in French dated 1802, in Stanbrook Annals 1.11, 504.

19 Cambrai MS 1004. Only one MS in this catalogue is now at Cambrai's Bibliothèque Municipale: MS A1155, Dame Agnes More's translation of Dame Jean of Cambrai's *Treatise of the Ruin of Proper Love*, and the *Building of Divine Love*, transcribed by Dame Susanna Phillips. Four other MSS from the Cambrai community, not listed in MS 1004, are also still at Cambrai: MSS A255, 910, 1154, 1361.

20 From private correspondence with Annie Fournier, Curator of manuscripts and rare books, at the Bibliothèque Municipale de Cambrai. Among the items known to be lost in the fire are 'Extrait de l'obitier des dames bénédictines anglaises de Cambrai (164-683),' and 'Mémoires et pièces de procedure.'

21 Cambrai MS 1004, pp. 529-534.

22 Bibliothèque Mazarine MS 4058.

Life, along with many other Cambrai manuscripts, is now housed at the Archives Départementales du Nord, in Lille. The French archivist Max Bruchet catalogued it as ‘Vie de Lady Faulkland,’ but incorrectly described Lady Falkland as her daughter Lucy: ‘Lucie-Madeleine Carv, fille de lord Faulkeland, vice-roi d’Irlande, née en 1585.’ He made this error because a fragment of Dame Magdalena’s death bill is inserted inside the manuscript²³ It states, rather ambiguously, that Lady Falkland is ‘a woman of an extraordinary piety as will appear in the relation of her life written by a person who knew her very well.’

CAMBRAI AND LADY FALKLAND’S DAUGHTERS

Lucy and Mary Cary (Dame Magdalena and Dame Maria) were admitted to Cambrai on the same day as Barbara Constable and Justina Gascoigne, on August 30, 1638. Elizabeth and Anne Cary (Dame Elizabetha and Dame Clementia) were admitted shortly thereafter, October 27, 1638 and March 8, 1639, respectively. Their arrival in the Spanish Netherlands coincided with Baker’s departure from the same country. These six women, and a lay-sister who died a year later, were all professed in 1640.²⁴ Known writings by this ‘Class of 1640’ indicate that as a group, they were more prolific than any other group of nuns educated and professed together at Cambrai. The type of writing was unusual in its quantity and range: transcriptions, translations, collections, songs, poems, sermons, and letters.

Aware of Baker’s poor health and his impending departure from Douai, Abbess Catherine Gascoigne asked Father Rudesind if Baker could return to Cambrai ‘to instruct some novices,’ instead of being sent on the mission.²⁵ The request was refused, and so the novices in question, including the Cary sisters, never had the privilege of being taught by Baker in person. Despite this, his influence on them was still great. Lady Falkland’s eldest daughter, Dame Clementia, was particularly affected by his teachings. Her death-notice states:

The instructions she followed, & the mentall exercises which she practised were those of venerable Father Augustin Baker of happy Memory For though she read other bookes of mistike Divines conformable to his, yet she declared she found non more easie & pleain to be understood then those of Reuerend Father Bakers.

Dame Maria made a transcription/paraphrase of Prichard’s life of Baker, of which only a 16-page quire remains.²⁶ This surviving fragment includes a rather terse description of Father Rudesind’s refusal to allow Baker to train the Cambrai novices:

Father Rudesind had refused leaue for his [Baker’s] going to Cambray, vpon the request of the Abbesse, for the instruction of some Nouices ... vpon pretence of his being vnable to take so long a iourney & yet now being weaker, they thought him able to take a much longer.

23 Max Bruchet, *Archives Départementales du Nord: Répertoire Numérique, Série H (Fonds Benedictins et Cisterciens)* (Lille, 1928).

24 Dame Magdalena and Dame Maria were probably professed on the same day as Dame Justina, April 15, 1640.

25 Prichard’s life of Baker, in ‘Memorials of Father Augustine Baker and Other Documents Relating to the English Benedictines,’ CRS (1933) 139, 144. Baker had offended the President, Father Rudesind Barlow, in a thinly-veiled personal attack in the *Treatise of the English Mission*, which prompted Barlow to demand that Baker be sent to England.

26 ‘The English Benedictine Nuns of the Convent of Our Blessed Lady of Good Hope in Paris, now St. Benedict’s Priory, Colwich, Staff. Notes and Obituaries,’ ed. Joseph Hansom, CRS *Miscellanea VII*, vol. 9 (1911) 342

In late 1646, the Catholic Thomas Whetenhall ‘spent a day or two to visit thos truly Religious Nuns of St. Benedicts Order, whom Reverend Father Baker’s directions and Mother Gertrude Moors Piety had so admirably distinguisht from many other Monasteries of that Order.’²⁸

Whetenhall’s admiration for Cambrai’s contemplative spirit obscures the fact that the 1640s were difficult years for the Cambrai nuns, financially and emotionally. In England, the Civil War was taking the lives of their fathers and brothers, and their family estates had been sequestrated. The nuns were unable to access the interest from their dowries and had become increasingly dependent on the English Benedictine Congregation for support. In the Spanish Netherlands, the Thirty Years’ War further added to the instability of day-to-day life. The number of nuns had increased in the 1640’s to an insupportable level (peaking at 50 nuns in 1645), so that, as the Paris House *History* puts it, if they did not receive outside help, they ‘must undoubtedly perish, or be forced to disperse.’²⁹ At the 1645 General Chapter of the English Benedictine Congregation, the President agreed to direct money from priests who died on the mission to the Cambrai nuns. By 1649, their numbers had increased further and ‘the persecution in England’³⁰ made it difficult to collect these *spolia*, as they were called. The nuns were unwilling to endure dispersal into French monasteries, however, resolving instead ‘to undergoe the greatest Exigencies together.’³¹

Abbess Christina Brent’s chapter speeches from 1641-45 indicate the financial and emotional toll of the English Civil War on the nuns. She encouraged them in their ‘patient suffering which we are like to haue much exercise of these sad times,’³² and urged them to be more careful with their expenses during this ‘hardnesse of the times. sauing as they can in all thinges, carefull in wast and spoyling of things’. She reports that the President of the EBC thought that they should cut back on food, and contribute to their own maintenance by ‘working for our liuing’.³³

The *Life of Lady Falkland* reflects the ethos of Abbess Christina’s chapter sermons from this period, both literally and metaphorically. There is an imprint of war-induced sadness in *Life*, even though *Life*’s story ends before the war begins. It tells how Lady Falkland’s two Catholic sons received maintenance from Henrietta Maria, ‘till the extreimity of these times,’³⁴ and how Lady Falkland ‘died about the begining of these trowbles of England.’³⁵ The monarchy is described as ‘the secound glorious cause’ after Catholicism, and Lucius’ and Lorenzo’s lives ‘could not have bene better lost, then in the cause of his Maiesty, except in the immediat cause of God.’³⁶

28 Whetenhall was en route from Paris to Ghent, arriving in Cambrai by post from Perone. From Richard Lassels, ‘The Voyage of the Lady Catherine Whetenhall,’ *Bibliothèque Royale de Belgique*, MS 7119, f. 40r (1650), in Edward Chancy, (Geneva, 1985) 371.

29 Paris House *History* (MS at Colwich) 34. By adding together the professions and deaths in the Cambrai register, the number of nuns in 1645 is 38, and 42 in 1650.

30 *ibid.*, 36.

31 *ibid.*, 38. Two years later, Dame Clementia, Dame Maria and a lay-sister founded a daughter-house at Paris, to alleviate Cambrai’s financial burden. [Now at Colwich.]

32 Lille MS 20H 10, p.896.

33 *ibid.*, p. 894. She does not mention the nature of the work.

34 *ibid.*, pp. 89 1-2.

35 *Life* 263, 267.

36 *ibid.*, 268.

Life transposes the Abbess' urging of the nuns to suffer patiently, not pettily, during the 'sad times' of the Civil War, onto a display of Lady Falkland's strength in faith during her own 'induring' when her children, husband, and so-called friends tormented her, when she went from wealth to poverty, and when her 'greatest sign of sadness was sleeping.' Likewise, Cambrai's dependence on others for financial support is paralleled by Life's digressions on the moral distinction between charity and loans, an issue very dear to Lady Falkland's heart. According to Lifr, Lady Falkland's experience of charity was made tolerable because of 'the much greater quiet and iustice, there is in begging than borrowing (when there is not moral certainty of paying).'³⁷ She preferred outright handouts over loans, 'out of the great detestation of going in debt.' Life writes that it was Lady Falkland's 'owne experience, of the torture and slavery of debt' that caused her to 'loath it,'³⁸ a sentiment echoed in Psalm 37: 'The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.' Lady Falkland justified her begging by telling herself that while some people might interpret 'this kind of asking, where some civility scarce leaves a liberty of refusing, as 'a kind of robbery; yet she was freed from that apprehension, by imagining all others to be of her owne humore'³⁹ This 'humor' consisted of a readiness to give money to others when she had it and they needed it, a precept she derived from Matthew 5:42, 'Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not those away.' Lady Falkland, according to *Life*, aligned herself with St. Paula, who believed 'that should she refuse' anyone in need 'it may be they would not find any that would giue them.' *Life* also states that 'Whilist she could not pay she held herself highly obliged to pray for her creditors,' (L 1008-9) which is in accordance with Matthew 6:12: 'And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.'

The problems at Cambrai at this time were not just fiscal. Some of the nuns had become lax in their precept of silence, particularly in the refectory, where the serving-men had taken 'great notice... for things they haue heard to their disedification'.⁴⁰ Abbess Christina urged the nuns not to talk to the novices, 'who have heard things which they should not and become scandalized, and lately one is gone away much vnsatisfied by the indiscretion of some who told her things she should not haue knowne, those things will turne to the disgrace of the monasterie.'⁴¹

Abbess Christina notes that some are 'so apt to speake unhansomely that they cannot be asked a reasonable question, but they answer so strangely that it is a pitty to heare them,'⁴² while others are late for divine office, and 'laugh and whisper one to another, euen the officers of the Quire for want of preparing their bookes.'⁴³ The infirmary had become a particularly unruly place: the Abbess had been told by the President of the EBC 'that he understands that

37 *ibid.*, 264.

38 *ibid.*, 265. Lady Falkland's letters indicate her hatred of debt: 'I am fame to bee releued, by those, that are in distresse theinselues, and hereafter I will rather chuse to suffer, then undoe my frends for mee' (SPD 16/75/85, August 1627).

39 *ibid.*, 265.

40 Lille MS 20H 10, p. 883

41 *ibid.*, p. 884. I have not been able to identify this scandal

42 *ibid.*, p.885

43 *ibid.*, p. 887.

there is verie great disorders and such liberties taken as he beleuees is not in any monasterie, nor has formerly been in ours. . .⁴⁴ Abbess Christina writes:

There are some make bangers and come late without ther acknowledging any fallt which was not our former custome; especially you Sister N. instead of acknowledging your fallt, laugh which makes a double fallt.⁴⁵

The nuns were often impatient with one another: ‘It is noted that in your employments that some speake verie sharply and looke and doe verie vnhandsomely shewing verie disgustfull lookes and dislikes.’⁴⁶ During this period of lax discipline, the previous abbess, Dame Catherine Gascoigne, and Dame Clementia Cary, were away from the monastery – ironically, to reform the French monastary in Cambrai, St. Lazare.

Abbess Christina’s observations of these incivilities at Cambrai provide an interesting backdrop to Life’s criticisms of the daughters’ disrespectful and ungrateful treatment of their mother. According to Life, when the daughters were reunited with their mother in 1629, they did not think it their ‘duty’ to respect their mother, ‘having bene left young by her.’⁴⁷ The theme of duty is raised again later in Life: they conceived of Lady Falkland’s ‘extraordinary care’ as a mother’s responsibility, while ‘they scarce thought the duty of children theirs.’⁴⁸ Having received from their father ‘the care of both father and mother,’ they accorded him ‘the loue and respect dew to both, leaving her but a smale part.’⁴⁹ They took advantage of the ‘vehement desire she had to keepe them,’ by threatening to leave her if their frivolous desires were not instantly gratified, causing their mother to deprive herself ‘secretly of thinges most nessessary’ in order to meet their demands. Even though ‘they knew well they should not haue bene in any other place,’ they ‘seemed to thinke’ that she should be beholden to them for remaining.⁵⁰ Life represents the daughters as unrelenting in their harshness, to the extent that if Lady Falkland ‘did amisse, and with all vexed them,’ even in the smallest matter, they would ‘reproach her with her religion as giuing her leave to doe any thinge,’ causing her to cry: Lady Falkland’s daughters commit fault upon double fault against their mother, rivalling the misbehaviour of the ‘Sister N’ of Abbess Christina’s sermon.⁵¹

Dame Magdalena was particularly rough on her mother. For example, when Lady Falkland was hungry, and ‘ready to putt her meate in her mouth,’ Dame Magdalena would remind her of the fast. *Life* clarifies that she stopped her mother not because she agreed with her mother’s ‘observance of the Churches precept’ but only ‘to laugh... to see how suddainly she had stopped her in her [Lady Falkland’s] hast.’⁵²

This depiction of Dame Magdalena as primary antagonist in *Life* bears an uncanny resemblance to her portrayal in her death notice.⁵³ The death notice emphasises that she was

44 *ibid.* The unruliness in the infirmary is also observed by Dame Barbara in *Gemitus Peccatorum*, or the *Complaints of Sinners*, completed December 1649 (now at Stanbrook).

45 *ibid.*, p.

46 *ibid.*, p. 891.

47 *Life* 217.

48 *ibid.*, 227

49 *ibid.*, 218

50 *ibid.*, 227.

51 *ibid.*, 228.

52 *ibid.*, 224.

53 CR5 (1913) 79-80, from Lille MS 20H 10

far from perfect before she converted, and that when she lost her temper, even her mother ‘scaped not her affronts.’ Further, Dame Magdalena was ‘very sensible of the many faults her jeering witt had made her fall into before her conversion, which afterwards shee did endeavour to satisfy for.’ The use of the word ‘sensible’ here surely implies that her painful awareness of the damage caused by her jeering wit was somehow made evident to the other nuns at Cambrai. Indeed, this expression of Dame Magdalena’s repentance and guilt makes her a likely candidate for the authorship of *Life*. If she is the author, *Life* can be seen as a lasting testament to how ‘sensible’ she was of her faults: in writing *Life*, she describes and confesses her faults for posterity.

Not only does she describe her faults, she also exhibits them. Dame Magdalena’s ‘jeering wit’ recalls another aspect of *Life*: its ironic humor, with clear ‘jeering’ undertones when discussing the antics of William Chillingworth. *Life* notes that Chillingworth ‘could hardly thinke any thinge well done that was not done by himself’ and wonders, rhetorically, ‘if euer he were a sound Catholike.’⁵⁴ That he was a Catholic at some point in time is evident because he managed to convert his own mother, ‘though God knows when.’⁵⁵ Chillingworth wanted Lady Falkland’s daughters to switch to his confessor ‘(who indeed had a greater opinion of him),’⁵⁶ but they were finally becoming wise to his ways. ‘Chillingworth’s ‘insupportable importunity’ was more of an annoyance than a danger, since they now ‘(as knowing him better) hearing him (for hear he would be) no more as a saint, but as a procurator for the divell.’⁵⁷ Her account of Chillingworth concludes with a sarcastic appraisal:

Abstracting from all truth and religion mr chillingworth seemed to be a kind of an honest man, and good natured, never seeking to doe any body any temporall hurt, and ready to doe courtysys; which, it may be, might be much to his owne purpose.⁵⁸

For Dame Magdalena, the process of writing about her mistreatment of her mother would have been an apologetic, confessional act, and a precursor to prayer. This was a practice common among other nuns, and was encouraged by Cambrai’s confessors. For example, Dame Gertrude More writes that she relies on her pen and tongue to stir up her ‘poor frozen soul,’ while Dame Barbara Constable writes as a way ‘to yeeld some comfort’ to herself at a time when mental prayer is not succeeding.⁵⁹ Dame Barbara’s brief flirtation with the higher levels of contemplation is obscured by ‘distractions and vanity,’ and yet she writes not for ‘pride or for ostentation sake’ but because she ‘had not abilitie enough’ to spend her time in the better occupation of mental prayer. This sort of ‘confessional biography’ or ‘autobiography’ took place in a nun’s cell, where she was allowed, according to their Constitution, ‘Inke, pennes, paper, bookes.’⁶⁰ These ‘loose papers’ as they were called, would then be recovered after the nun had died, and sometimes placed in the general library.

Did the *Life* of Lady Falkland begin in Dame Magdalena’s cell, then, as a ‘loose paper’? According to Dame Maria’s marginal annotation in *Life*, Dame Magdalena was ‘the occasion

54 *Life* 232.

55 *ibid.*, 233.

56 *ibid.*

57 *ibid.*

58 *ibid.*, 253.

59 *Gemitus Peccatorum*, 274.

60 Lille MS 20H 1, p. 42.

of the conversion of all the rest’,⁶¹ She was also the first sister to die, on November 1, 1650. At her death, or in her final sickness, her loose papers could have been recovered from her cell, and then emended by her siblings (particularly Dame Maria and Patrick). and placed in the library. This would explain the contents of the aforementioned entry in the library catalogue: ‘The writings of the most religious dame D. Magdalena Cary de St. Cruce professed religious of the most holy order of St. Benedict.’

The handwriting in *Life* provides more concrete authorship clues than the circumstantial evidence I have discussed so far. To begin with, it is crucial to note that *Life* is written by an unpractised hand.⁶² This same hand transcribes two pages of a manuscript at Downside of Father Baker’s *Alphabet*, and makes corrections to the rest of *Alphabet*. Another part of this same manuscript volume, Baker’s *Conversio Morum*, is corrected by one of the members of the class of 1640, Dame Barbara Constable.⁶³

Two of the sisters, Dame Clementia and Dame Maria, can immediately be ruled out as the main scribe based on their handwriting. Dame Clementia’s hand is explicitly identified in two manuscripts now at Colwich Abbey:⁶⁴ the *Constitution*, and Colwich MS 23, a book of collections. These confirm that Dame Clementia’s hand is different from the hand that wrote *Life*.

Dame Maria’s hand can be identified from a single marginal annotation in *Life*, in which three of the sisters are identified as ‘Mother Clementia, Dame Magdalena, and Sister Maria.’⁶⁵ The Cambrai *Constitution* states that the choir nuns are to refer to themselves in speech or writing as ‘Sisters,’ to each other as ‘Dames,’ and to the Prioress and Sub-Prioress as ‘Mother.’⁶⁶ Thus, ‘Sister Maria’ wrote this particular addition. In another marginal addition, three of the sisters are identified as Mother Clementia, Dame Augustina, and Dame Magdalena.⁶⁷ If one of them had written this addition, she would have identified herself as ‘Sister.’ Again, Dame Maria appears to have written this marginal addition, as well as many others throughout *Life*. Dame Maria’s hand appears in other Cambrai manuscripts, including part of a life of Baker described earlier, and in three manuscripts at Lille in a bundle identified as 20H 39.

61 *Life* 228.

62 The ‘z’ and ‘k’ are awkwardly formed; the usage of the u/v graph does not conform to contemporary patterns (for example, ‘qv’ instead of ‘qu’). Words normally ending in ‘tch’ end in as in ‘wicht.’ She transposes the letter ‘w,’ as in forsowrne, and ‘r,’ as in frist. The terminal ‘e’ is wanting in prid, guid, sid, sincer,

63 Downside MS 29. *Alphabet* is paginated, while *Conversio Morum* is foliated. Dame Barbara makes corrections to *Conversio Morum*. It was written at Cambrai, but later belonged to Paris, and then St. Edmund’s.

64 Colwich MS 22, f. 24v; Paris *Constitution* (now at Colwich).

65 *Life* 247.

66 Cambrai *Constitutions* 1, 3:14 (1631). I am indebted to Dame Margaret Truran of Stanbrook Abbey, for this observation.

67 The Weller/Ferguson edition of *Life* omits this annotation. If they had included it, it would appear on p. 217.

A third sibling can be tentatively ruled out. An autograph letter from Dame Elizabetha to a Colonel Grace, dated August 10, 1659 has many similar letter formations to *Life*.⁶⁸ However, Dame Elizabetha's hand is smoother, more relaxed and more efficient than *Life*, and some of the letter forms (p and k) are entirely different creatures. It is not impossible, though, that these differences are a natural maturation of style, since *Life* was written approximately thirteen years earlier than the letter to Colonel Grace. Comparison may be drawn with the hand of Dame Barbara Constable, whose extant manuscripts cover the period 1644 to 1683, and whose letter forms alter noticeably through the years. But the style and tone of *Life* still leads me to suspect that the hand belongs to Dame Magdalena.

LIFE-WRITING AT CAMBRAI

What other reasons, aside from penitence, caused *Life* to be written? Why did monks and nuns write Lives at all? And what models would have been available to Dame Magdalena and her sisters?

Life-writing and life-reading were popular activities at Cambrai in the 1640s, suggesting that the genre would have been quite familiar to the Cary sisters. The Cambrai catalogue made at the time of the French revolution includes pre-1650 printed and manuscript lives of Mary Stuart (1636), Marguerite de Lorraine (1628, in French), St. Scholastica, St. Ignatius of Loyola, St. Bernard, St. Francis, Tauler, the Blessed Lady of Loreto (1608), St. Catherine (1627), three copies of Sister Maria Magdalena, a Florentine nun (1619), over twenty copies of St Teresa (1611, 1671), and the 'History of Thomas More.'⁶⁹ We can also assume that the community possessed lives listed in the catalogue of manuscripts of the Paris community, which included Father Baker's Life and Death of Dame Gertrude More, Life and Death of Dame Margaret Gascoigne, and Life and Death of Mr. Francis Gascoigne, as well as the Life of Mother Anne of St. Bartholomew and the Life of Blessed Angelique.

The Cary sisters would certainly have been familiar with the lives of Thomas More, since More's great-great grand-daughter Gertrude was one of the founding members of Cambrai. Dame Gertrude's father, Cresacre More, published his Life and Death of Sir Thomas Moore in 1630, and the Cambrai nuns would also have known of the lives by Roper, Harpsfield, and Stapleton. Of all of these lives, Roper's most resembles the style of *Life*, since like *Life*, it was written by a domestic eye-witness and has a somewhat myopic view of its subject, omitting what might seem like historically important facts, such as More's authorship of *Utopia*, in favor of more personal anecdotes.

They also would have read the lives of Augustine Baker, written by Baker himself, by Father Leander Prichard, Father Serenus Cressy, and Father Peter Salvin.⁷⁰ The Prichard and

68 Bodleian Clarendon SP 63, ff.58-59. 'f' and 'z' are particularly similar, as is the unconventional use of the u/v graph (ie. 'qv' instead of 'qu').

69 Cambrai MS 1004.

70 These lives are extant in Mazarine MS 1755, *Quadriologus*, which belonged to the Paris community, and was completed in the late 17th century by four scribes, including Dame Mechtilde Tempest and Dame Maura Wythain. The fourth life in this volume is Father Serenus Cressy's life of Baker, written in the 1650s. Salvin's and Cressy's lives appear in Dom Justin McCann, ed., *The Life of Father Augustine Baker OSB (1575-1641)* by Fr Peter Salvin & Fr Serenus Cressy (London, 1933). Baker's and Prichard's lives are edited by McCann and Doin Hugh Connolly in *Memorials of Father Augustine Baker and other documents relating*

Salvin lives of Baker were written at the request of the Cambrai nuns, and Salvin's life of Baker, finished April 8, 1646, is in fact exactly contemporary with the life of Lady Falkland. Perhaps Dame Magdalena was inspired by Salvin's life, or 'appreciation' of Baker, as Dom Justin McCann aptly refers to it. Salvin cites as one of his reasons for writing the life of Baker: 'to see on my part how I have gone backward and how untoward I have been in the prosecution of my own.'⁷¹

In Baker's autobiography, ostensibly narrated by Prichard, Baker writes that 'the matter' of his life 'may justly breed hope in others, who now perhaps ly in suddes of sin or tepidity of life.'⁷² Could Dame Magdalena have been suffering from 'untowardness,' like Salvin, or lying in 'suddes of sin,' as Baker suggests, which could only be scrubbed away by the exercise of writing them out' Salvin's life of Baker is more about Salvin's gratitude to Baker, and Salvin's personal experiences of Baker, than it is about Baker himself. Similarly, Lady Falkland's life is as much about the experiences of her Catholic children as it is about Lady Falkland.

Another life with Benedictine connections would have been known to the Cary daughters before they became nuns. This was Father Cuthbert Fursden's English translation of Bishop Richard Smith of Chalcedon's Latin *Life of the most honourable and vertuous lady Lady Magdalena Viscountess Montague* (1627). Fursden had converted the Cary sisters in the summer of 1634, while living at Drury House as Lady Falkland's chaplain.⁷³ Dame Clementia was the dedicatee of Fursden's translation of St. Gregory's *The Second Book of the Dialogues of St. Gregorie the Greate containing the life and miracles of our holy father St. Benedict. To which is adjoined the Rule of the same holie Patriarche*, published posthumously in 1638. Anthony Batt, who prepared the work for publication, dedicates it to Dame Clementia, according to the late Fursden's wishes, 'whoe I am sure hath a prime place in your memorie.'⁷⁴

The preface of the life of Lady Montague stresses the importance of writing the lives of pious women, even if they are not of saint-like quality, for four reasons: to satisfy the writer's devotions, offer an honest intermission from graver studies, praise God through his saints, and induce others to piety through example. Smith's justification of his choice of Viscountess Montague as subject of a biography could be equally applied to Lady Falkland:

I propose a woman, not famous for rudeness of habit, or rigour of diet, or severity of discipline, or abnegation of the world., so that they who despair to imitate the admirable sanctity of St. Mary Magdalene may see themselves capable to attain the piety of Magdalene Viscountess Montague. . . Whether she deserved the opinion of sanctity, let others judge.⁷⁵

to the *English Benedictines*' (CR5, 1933).

71 Salvin's life of Baker, p.5.

72 Baker's life of himself, p. 7.

73 Allanson's *Biographies of the English Benedictines* (Ampleforth, 1999) state that F. Cuthbert, or John Fursden, was 'appointed Chaplain to Lady Falkland after her conversion to the Catholic faith, and after the death of Lord Falkland in 1633, he had the happiness of witnessing the conversion of most of the members of her noble family. He died chaplain to her in London on 2nd of February 1638.'

74 STC 12350. [Douai] 1638.

75 Richard Smith, Bishop of Chalcedon, *The Life of the Most Honourable and Vertuous Lady the Lad~Magdalen Viscountesse Montague*, .Trans. Cuthbert Fursden (St Omer: English College Press, 1627), reprinted as *An Elizabeth Recusant House. Comprising the Life of the Lady Magdalen Viscountess Montague (1538-1608)*, ed. A.C. Southern (London: Sands and Co, 1954) 25.

The House History of the Paris community (1695) gives two further reasons for chronicling a ‘life,’ albeit a life of a community and not an individual, both of which are strongly echoed in the *Life* of Lady Falkland. These are gratitude to God for divine providence and gratitude to benefactors for temporal assistance (in the form of hard cash). Dame Teresa Cooke writes:

Our design having only bin to put us in mind, to give Almighty God daily thanks for his Extraordinary Providence towards us; As likewise to oblige ourselves, to be continually mindfull in our Devotions and Communion, of our Benefactours, as well living as dead.⁷⁶

They describe the house history as a ‘short, but true Relation, of the most considerable things, that have hapned among Us,’ omitting ‘to mention many particulars of lesse moment, not thinking them necessary, Or convenient to be related.’⁷⁷ The words ‘design’ and ‘convenient’ signify that the house history was not merely a repository of ‘things that happened,’ but a framing of those particular events which exemplified the roles of providence and benefaction in the life of their community.

While ‘design’ and ‘true relation’ might appear to be contradictory terms, it is important to remember that spiritual truth, and not objective truth, was the primary goal of early modern writers. Sir Philip Sidney unapologetically explains ‘that a feigned example hath as much force to teach as a true example,’ and that often, a poet ‘must tell events whereof he can yield no cause; or, if he do, it must be poetical,’ ie., in providential terms.⁷⁸ In spite of the implicit understanding that poetic licence was a necessary tool for historians and biographers, Protestants were suspicious of the liberties taken by Catholics in late medieval hagiography. In John Foxe’s ‘Epistle to the Reader’ in *Acts and Monuments*, he explains that unlike the ‘*Legendae illi Aureae* (magis dicam plumbaeae)’ of Voragine, his stories are compiled from the archives and registers of bishops, and from the letters of the martyrs themselves.⁷⁹ In his dedication to Queen Elizabeth, he responds to Catholic accusations that his stories are exaggerated: ‘with tragical voices they exclaim and wonder upon it [his Book of Martyrs], sparing no cost of hyperbolical phrases to make it appear as full of lies as lines,’ while they ‘altogether delight in untruths..., feigned fables, lying miracles, false visions ... and almost no true tale in all their saints’ lives.’⁸⁰ And yet his *Book of Martyrs* is full of providential tales. The Cambrai and Paris nuns had been sensitised to Protestant criticisms of hagiographical excess, and thus used eye-witness testimony and real documents to add weight to their design, keeping their use of miracles to a minimum in their house histories and death-notice.

Like most early modern biographies, then, the *Life* of Lady Falkland mingles providence and proof with no sense of contradiction. But *Life*’s citations of letters, petitions, and the Star Chamber and Kings’ Bench cases are all used to prove a very providential point: If Lady Falkland had not converted, and subsequently lost her inheritance, her daughters would never have been forced to consider a conventual life. Providence, in the form of the trials and tribulations of a brilliant but scatter-brained Catholic mother, led them to Cambrai. *Life* states:

76 Paris House *History* 312.

77 Convenient: suitable to the conditions or circumstances (OED, a, 4W Obs.)

78 Sir Philip Sidney, *An Apology for Poetry, or The Defence of Poesy*, ed. Geoffrey Shepherd (Manchester, 1973) 110

79 *The Acts and Monuments of John Foxe: A New and Complete Edition*, ed. Rev. Stephen Reed Cattle, vol. 1 (London, 1841) 506-7.

80 *ibid.*, 503.

What she [Lady Falkland] did vndergoe, to keepe them with her... may well giue them cause to acknowledge she was their mother in faith as well as in nature.⁸¹

It should be noted, however, that *Life* is careful to use the doctrine of providence responsibly, withholding it when it appears that Lady Falkland was slightly deluded, as she was in her confidence in God that she would be supplied with her meager needs. *Life* writes:

But as this confidence was in part humaine (built on her many frinds and much acquaintance) god did permitt her in some sort to see her self deceived in it (in as much as it was so) before she dyed.⁸²

CONCLUSION

Neither Baker's treatises, Cambrai's constitution, or the Benedictine Rule, explicitly recommend the writing of lives. The 'monastical spirit' of the *Life* of Lady Falkland becomes apparent, however, when its genesis is seen in relation to writing practises at Cambrai, by looking beyond the text to the occasion and purpose of its composition. Like the house historians at Paris, *Life* emphasises the role of divine providence and temporal benefaction, without which the Cary daughters would never have arrived at Cambrai. In this sense it is a document of gratitude. *Life* also reflects the author's response to the difficult times at Cambrai in the 1640's – the financial problems caused by the Civil War, and the overall decline in discipline.

As I have tried to argue, the writing of *Life* was probably first suggested by Dame Magdalena's confessor, as a confessional act. According to *Life*, and to her death-notice, Dame Magdalena was the most ill-behaved and unappreciative of Lady Falkland's children. It seems likely that in addition to the more conventional reasons Magdalena desired to atone for her unfairness towards her mother, whom she did not fully respect until she arrived at Cambrai. Once this task was accomplished, Dame Magdalena could free her conscience and partake in mental prayer with the other nuns in the writerly 'Class of 1640' at Cambrai.

81 *Life* 227.

82 *ibid.*, 245.