OF MATERNAL BONDS: THE REPRESENTATION AND PERFORMANCE OF MOTHERHOOD THROUGH THE TEXTS OF ELIZABETH GRYMESTON (1563–1603), ELIZABETH JOSCELIN (1595–1622) AND ELIZABETH WALKER (1623–1690)

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PhD Thesis in English Studies

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2025

Este trabajo está dedicado a mi hija
Mariana Laurentina Alvar Díez,
con todo mi amor, admiración y entusiasmo

The first cause of writing
is a motherly affection

Dorothy Leigh
The Mothers Blessing, 1616

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to many people and institutions that trusted me to make this project possible. First and foremost, thanks to Dr. Joan Curbet Soler, my supervisor, for carefully taking care of this thesis with endless support and encouragement. His assistance and supervision have been key for navigating this process until the end. I would also like to thank Dr. Carme Font Paz for having believed in me from the beginning and for being an exceptional guide, inspiration and a source of wisdom and peace. Other members of the thesis committee gave me strength and unvaluable advice in the annual supervisions: Paula Yurss, Nick Spengler, Sara Martín Alegre, David Owen, Felicity Hand, Cristina Pividori, Laura Gimeno and Jordi Coral. I am especially grateful to Dr. Francesca Blanch for asking me a fundamental question, from which, the answer to, became an essential goal in my thesis.

As a member of the WINK project, under European Research Council Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, and under the direction of Carmen Font Paz, my research and archival work in the British Library was partially funded, which was extraordinarily helpful. The contribution to my work from the members of the British Library was essential: I am especially thankful to Wallace Kwong Ferguson for his kindness and willingness to assist and resolve my endless doubts. Anthony kindly gave me his assistance with the deliverance of the material. Elias Mazzuco, Janet Portman and Zoe Stansell offered their support providing me with reference letters when I needed them. The Humanities and Social Sciences library at McGill University in Montreal kindly offered their services, supplying me with many needed books.

The combination of my teaching responsibilities at San Pablo CEU school with the process of writing this thesis was complicated, but my institution, under the direction of Carlos Ortiz Sanchidrián, was happy to help whenever I had to take some time away from school. Thanks also to all my work colleagues who showed interest and support for my thesis; Pilar Blanco Navarro especially for listening to my rehearsals of the supervision sessions, Ruth Jiménez Balboa, Carmen Petrache and Judith Martínez Martín for always showing genuine interest in this project and listening carefully.

I have to acknowledge Lis Cercadillo for her insistence on applying for a grant that I finally would partially obtain. She has been a passionate teacher and a guiding companion. Her genuine belief in me made this project possible.

On a more personal note, I am forever indebted to my lifetime friends Laura Méndez, Blanca Reyero Pita and Mariola Cortés Cros. My family has always been supportive of my work: my gratitude to all of them, including my grandparents who passed away a long time ago but whose presence is, and will always be, unforgettable.

Alfredo Alvar was the first person to encourage me to do a thesis, and to write. What I have learnt from him cannot be expressed here; thank you for enlightening my life and for believing in me. Guillermo Guisado has been a continuous support: thank you for changing my life for the better. And, finally, my eternal gratitude to my daughter, Mariana Laurentina Alvar Díez, who taught me the most valuable lessons in life, and who gave me practical knowledge on how to become a mother. This work is dedicated to her.

Prefatory Note

Note about Format

This thesis has been written following the Department of English and German's style guide.

Note about Transcriptions

The texts have been transcribed as they originally were written. The additions or suggestions when the text is unclear have been signaled with square brackets. If there are exceptions, it will be indicated in a footnote.

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Introduction

On the seventh of July of 2024, while I was defending before a tribunal part of the thesis that you, dear reader, are just about to read, Dr. Francesca Blanch, a member of that tribunal, asked me a fundamental question: what is the definition of motherhood? Even though I had been studying the performance of motherhood in seventeenth-century England for four years already, I could not give a final answer then. I wrote this fundamental question in my notebook, and I promised myself to give a viable answer in less than a year. I will immediately address this issue but allow me to make some introductory remarks.

I have always considered motherhood to be a major topic in history and literature, but one that has been somehow neglected and forgotten, or relegated to secondary chapters in general history books. It is certainly true that in the final decades of the twentieth century, and thanks to the development of feminism in its different forms, a renewed interest in the history of women became evident and several extraordinary academic works were released, all of them exploring the topics of gender and women.[1] Motherhood was studied and included in these works, but –as a reader of these studies- I have always felt that it was too briefly explored, and especially that it was valued as a major aspects of women's lives, not as a pivotal part of human history or as a major cultural phenomenon in itself. Therefore, I would say that the achievement of more ambitious investigations, tackling different historical periods and the different perspectives on motherhood within them, is still in development all over the Western academic world, and is only recently beginning to offer results that are truly worthy of the topic. The present thesis will be, I hope, a very modest but sincere step in this direction.

Do mothers have a history?[2] Or, to put the question in clearer terms: do mothers have a history if it is an *unwritten* one? This has been a traditional problem among scholars: private life must become to a certain extent public, in order to be

[1] To mention only a few among many: Crawford and Mendelson 1998; Prior 1985; Cressy 1997; Fraser 1997, and many others that I will duly reference in this thesis.

[2] This question is also asked by the historian Jodi Vandenberg-Daves in his journal article "Teaching Motherhood in History", in which he explains the difficulties of making people understand the necessity of teaching a course on the history of motherhood (Vandenberg-Daves, 2002: 234-5).

considered a proper subject matter for history. The need for documents (memoirs, letters, journals, autobiographies and legacies) is therefore crucial to any project of this kind; in my view, research on this matter must have as its object the recovery of the voices of mothers, both from their pens and (when they were able to publish) from their printed works. Sometimes, of course, personal documents are not sufficient, since culture is not made only of these, but also of the multiple discourses surrounding them from a legal, religious or social viewpoint. And consequently, several scholars have tried to offer a more accurate historical idea of motherhood through the study of medicine, legacies, wills, books of prayer, catechisms or manuals of behavior and religion, as we will see through the pages of the present work. To the obvious difficulties in finding and using that kind of documents, and giving a coherence to them, must be added the fact that they are not always available, and even that sometimes they do not exist anymore in a recoverable shape. The inherent problems of literacy in the early modern world will always hinder our approach, as primary sources may be flawed, difficult to read or incomplete.

But even being aware of all the problems, limitations and complexities of our task, the answer to the question "*Do mothers have a history?*" must be an unqualified yes; they do have a history, but this history is a myriad of small stories that need cohesion, connection and perspective. This thesis is a humble attempt to contribute to the achievement of a more global history of motherhood.

Soren Kierkegaard once gave a definition of personal education that I profoundly admire:

> What, then, is education? I believe it is the course that the individual goes though in order to possess oneself, and, therefore, the person who one will not go through this course is not much helped by being born in the most enlightened age (…).[3]

Motherhood (in its biological, or in any not-only-biological version of it: stepmothers, aunts, nurses or servants who have often performed the task of mothers) has been essential for our development as a culture. Putting it in Kierkegaardian terms, the experience of motherhood (as a mother or as a child) is also an essential path of personal education that all individuals need to go through in order to take possession of themselves, to become a self, to own a soul. The achievement of that cycle, individually and collectively, is a necessary process in

[3] I give this translation form Kierkegaard, Soren (1843, trans. Howard and Edna Hong 1943: 46). This is the canonical English language edition.

life: a part of its history, of its protagonists and of its traces will be revealed in the next pages.

I The meaning of motherhood: origins of this thesis

In his *Grammar of Fantasy* (1973), Gianni Rodari used a metaphor to explain visually the effects of just one word, *one* word only, in our human brain. I remember very well the simile: a stone that we carelessly throw in a lake but which causes many different waves in the water for a while; a rippling effect on a smooth, calm surface.[4] The memory came to me when I started writing this introduction, because this particular word ("motherhood") brings on many different, rippling emotions to me and doubtlessly to anyone who might be reading this text, whoever may it be. What kind of waves can the word "motherhood" produce on the smooth surface of our selves? What comes to our minds if we think for a second about this particular term?

I guess that it depends on how intense our particular experiences of motherly affection, whether received or given, have been. But it is inevitable that the general perception of motherhood will generate connotations of unconditional love, consolation, comfort, tenderness, security, calm, joy and assurance. It may well be that other implications resonate in other individuals, evoking less pleasant emotions such as fear, anger, resentment or repression. And in several other cases, the reaction will consist of a combination of both kids of connotations, rushing to the mind in different degrees and with unequal force, but surely emerging as well from the deepest recesses of the heart. No matter, then, what the connotations of the term are: motherhood (or its absence, or its substitution) has been a key experience upon which our notion of selfhood has been built. So, at least, it has been since the concept of nuclear family was established in the West, precisely around the sixteenth and (very precisely) the seventeenth centuries.

In this brief section at the start, I would like to explain to the reader why motherhood and maternal bonds were so vital to this work and, on personal basis,

[4] "A stone thrown into a pond sets in motion concentric waves that spread out on the surface of the water, and their reverberation has an effect on the water lilies and reeds, the paper boat, and the buoys of the fishermen at various distances. All these objects are just there for themselves, enjoying their tranquility, when they are wakened to life, as it were, and are compelled to react and to enter into contact with one another. Other invisible vibrations spread into the depths, in all directions, as the stone falls and brushes the algae, scaring the fish and continually causing new molecular movements. When it then touches the bottom, it stirs up the mud and bumps into things that have rested there forgotten, some of which are dislodged, others buried once again in the sand" (Rodari 1973:15).

to me, its author. I will explore some of the essential changes in the general perception of "motherly bonds" or "natural instinct" that had a fundamental role in the original conception of this work, where I have tried to link both my attraction for the new academic trends related to this subject in the twentieth century and the turning point in maternal affection that I had already spotted in the personal and private writings of some seventeenth century mothers. But let me tackle these matters in order.

The fifth commandment of the Bible (the KJV version was clear): "Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you." (Exodus, 20:12 and Deuteronomy, 5:16). So, the general, common, popular feeling about mothers (and fathers) was that, as providers of and care for the child, they deserve love, obedience, and due respect. But what happened when motherhood went wrong? In 1951, a psychologist named John Bowlby published *Maternal Care and Mental Health*; he argued there that deprivation of maternal love caused long-term mental and biological problems and put on the spotlight the parental conflicts that for so long had been unmentioned among psychologists.[5] What he stated seems obvious nowadays, but it was not that clear in the fifties and sixties, especially since almost all types of therapy, including the so called *Antipsychiatry*, concluded with processes of "forgiveness" and of acceptance, being offered from children (then grown up adults who went under psychological treatment) to the parents that failed. Bowlby was clear:

> Among the most significant development of psychiatry during the past quarter of a century has been the steady growth of evidence that the quality of the paternal care which a child receives in his earliest years is of vital importance for his future mental health (Bowlby, 1953: 13).

This statement, that proved that not all parents were ready to take care for their children, or mature enough to support them, would lead to more developed theories that challenged the common perception and relations among parents and children. But, in itself, this line of thought seemed reasonable enough to me. Bowlby, basing his thesis on experiments made with animals and also with people, defended that the attachment between mother and child was essential to the future healthy development of the child, in body and mind.

[5] The complete reference is to Bowlby, John, *Child care and the growth of love*, 1953; the book is based on the original reports he had to elaborate for the World Health Organization in 1951.

Unfortunately, we also know the consequences of depriving the child from mothering, in his first years of life. In 1945 Dr. René Spitz (cited in Verny, 2008: 172-173) led an investigation on the comparative development of kids who had been left into an orphanage, being deprived of their mothers, and those who had been put into a nursing home close to a prison for women, who were allowed to spend some hours a day with their real mothers. The results were that the children who had been completely deprived of their mothers (the ones in the orphanage) were timid, with very little curiosity, and with a remarkable inclination to diseases and infections. It indeed seems that a severe depravation of social and emotional contact with the mother in early stages of life has tragic consequences in the emotional development of children. The Spanish neuroscientific and Doctor Francisco Mora, whose theory about the windows of knowledge reflects also the importance of an adequate upbringing among children, remembers the story of Akbar Khan, the emperor of Mongolia, who decided to isolate 12 children in 1705. They would be taken care of only by deaf-mute people, because the emperor wished to know what kind of language existed "inside" the human race, what language we would speak without the influence of our mothers or relatives. He discovered that the primitive language was one of gestures and body expression (Mora, 2005: 77). These are just instances that highlight the important discoveries made on the forms of maternal relationships throughout the twentieth century. And all of them impressed me, of course, but for different reasons.

All of these examples, though certainly interesting, assume the existence of a "bond" between their mothers and their children that, if it should be removed, would reveal important data through its absence. But in 1980 Elisabeth Badinter, following the path opened by Bowlby, published a revolutionary book that questioned maternal love in itself. What type of instinct is this that can affect only some women? Can we define as abnormalities the cases of those women who lack the maternal instinct? How can we explain the sheer numbers of abandoned children, that grew steadily in different moments of history, for instance in France in the seventeenth century? She offered a gloomy conclusion:

> Maternal love is just a human feeling. And, like any other sentiment, is uncertain, fragile, and imperfect. Opposing the conventional ideas that we have received, perhaps it is not intrinsically inscribed in female nature. If we observe the evolution of maternal attitudes, we can verify that the interest for, and dedication to, the offspring can either be manifested, or not. Tenderness may exist, or not. The different ways of conceiving and

> expressing maternal love go from more to less affection, passing also through nothing or almost nothing (Badinter, 1980: 14).

Years later, Alice Miller, a Polish and Jewish psychologist, explored the lives of thousands of grown-up children, both famous and anonymous, and rebelled against the idea that forgiveness and submission had to be the only way out for complete mental recovery in cases of psychological imbalance. She challenged the idea of obedience and encouraged her patients to break completely the existing bonds between them and their fathers or mothers. The reason was, as she saw it, that the bodies of once neglected and abused children *never* lied:

> The cases displayed here prove clearly that these people paid the relationship with their parents with grave illnesses, early deaths or suicides. The hiding of the truth of the suffering received in their childhoods was in complete contradiction with the wisdom of their bodies, a wisdom that was reflected in their writings [she was referring to writers like Proust or Kafka] but in an unconscious manner: the body, inhabited by a despised child, felt always misunderstood and scorned. (Miller, 2005: 28, translation mine).

These trends in psychology were suggestive to me in my years as a student, not because they had any inherent or obvious truth in them, but simply because of the questions they raised. I kept making these discoveries and reading occasionally these books, and I have to admit that these kinds of examples were new and surprising for me. Did *all* women love their children? Did they have to conceal their pain they felt when these children died in infancy, or they were so accustomed to the situation that they did not feel the anguish anymore? Was maternal affection, as Badinter stated, just a matter of luck? But if so, how did mothers cope with the loss of children? What shape had maternity taken throughout our history? And why where there so few books on such an important matter?

Interesting and informative though these books were, provocative as obviously they wanted to be, I clearly was not positioning myself adequately for an historical understanding of motherhood. Why, after all, had it become such an almost impeachable institution, in spite of its many failures or shortcomings? Should it really be approached naturally or psychologically, culturally or also historically? As a former student, I still felt that the phenomenon deserved more specificity in the treatment, more concretion. And at that point I made a discovery that has determined, to a long extent, my feelings and my scientific perspectives as a scholar.

I have to say that a major breakthrough for me came when I discovered the work of Patricia Crawford, the extraordinary scholar of seventeenth-century

English culture. Here, at least, were women whose experience seemed approached with no prejudice, trying to bring out the specificities of their experience. Crawford has tried, from the most neutral position, to shed light upon female works that had belonged to the margins and shadows of our knowledge. The general history of English women in Early Modern times that she published in collaboration with Sara Mendelson in 1998[6], meant one more step in the field of general women history. The book was ambitious and dense and was conceived as a whole, a conception of history that I share. Another two major assets of the author are the magnificent book on *Women and Religion* (Crawford, 1993), and the article for Valerie Fildes in her compilation *Women as Mothers in Pre-industrial England*: "The construction and experience of maternity in seventeenth-century England", where she stated clearly the lack of interest in history that motherhood had aroused until then: a trend she consciously intended to revert.[7]

An academic anthology that cannot be overlooked in my development is the enormous compilation created by Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer in 2004[8].On a purely personal level it was, in fact, my introductory map when I began this journey, and my supervisor gave it to me as a welcoming present. However, it tends to support the idea that Protestantism encouraged women to defy patriarchal domination:

> The emerging Protestant emphasis on individualism and responsibility to own's own conscience authorized women to resist their husband's domination by claiming they were doing God's will (Ostovich and Sauer, 2004: 7).

This statement perhaps needs (I felt at the moment of reading it) some reconsideration. Because, as we shall see, the writings that women created (in general) in the seventeenth century, in the Protestant environment, did not challenge the male-based hierarchy. They did on the surface, certainly (because the mere act of writing was transgressive), but the contents used to comply with the

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[6] I am referring here to the essential volume Crawford and Mendelson, *Women in Early Modern England*, 1998.

[7] "The continuance of human society has always depended upon woman's ability to give birth: an obvious point, but one frequently overlooked. Without women's reproductive labor, society would cease to exist. Since reproduction is essential, all societies have an interest in controlling it. (…) Motherhood is more than a social construct, however: it is part of women's unique biological functioning. Despite the importance of motherhood for women and for human society, it attracted comparatively little interest from historians until recently." (Crawford 1990: 3-67), I cannot help but mentioning another fundamental work of hers: *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (Crawford 2004).

[8] The complete reference is to Ostovich, Helen & Sauer, Elizabeth, *Reading Early Modern Women. An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print, 1550-1700*, 2004.

strict social and patriarchal patterns[9]. Protestantism, and I'm in accordance with scholars like Patricia Crawford here, did *not* contribute to a major increase in female social dominance[10]. Patricia Crawford specified two absolutely essential aspects that act as a deterrent to the general and widespread idea of superior treatment given by Protestants to women: the first one, is the devaluation of Virgin Mary (and I shall have much more to say on this later); and the second, the impossibility for English women of having a monastic life if they did not wish to marry. The more I have advanced in my thesis the more convinced I have become of this position. The religious perspective of both Catholics and Protestants differed in a wide variety of aspects, but we need to consider in this thesis, with special delicacy and accuracy, the role of women in both milieus.

As I kept discovering the rich and immensely varied scholarly work of Crawford, Ostovich, Sauer or others, I kept observing that it was absolutely necessary, as they did in their works, to become as close as possible (though their writings and their personal documents) to the women of that period in their specific historical existence. These were no mere numbers, no isolated individual examples: they were mothers living among others mothers, having a difficult everyday life that we can document quite well, and it was in them and others like them that dwelt the key that could allow us a good understanding into how motherhood, as a concept, was validated and constructed in that moment, the moment when the whole of British civilization was getting started on the way towards modernity. If there was an academic contribution that I could make, I knew and felt that it would have to do with this: with women who had experienced motherhood and written about it in private (and sometimes in print), who had described their own reality directly from their experience.

There was, however, yet another element that I wanted to take into account. Even though these women lived and wrote in England at different moments of the seventeenth century, they were separated by their beliefs, and they experienced motherhood accordingly. In the course of my investigations, I came across three mothers (Elizabeth Grymeston, Elizabeth Joscelyn, Elizabeth Walker) who, while being each a powerful writer on this topic on her own right, are also three distinct instances, singular examples of it. Their printed works show very precisely how very wrong would it be to generalize when analyzing motherhood in this period.

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[9] Writing on Grymeston's text, Valerie Wayne states that texts like this "were important agents in providing still more injunctions on female behaviour, most of which supported the ideological work performed in male-authored texts" (Wayne 1996: 66).

[10] One of the first words in Wiliam Gouge's *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622) in the chapter dedicated to wives, was "subjection".

Grymeston is Catholic, Walker is Protestant, Joscelin is a Puritan. The reason why I decided, in the end, to study them together was to have a more precise, more detailed framework from which I would be able to look at the most important social process of all: motherhood, as it was experienced in seventeenth century England.

I will now detail the aspects which will make the core of my research, in the form of specific questions that will, eventually, be answered at the end of each chapter and at the end of the thesis.

II Research Questions

Understanding that the experience of motherhood was crucial to the development of real people living and writing in the early modern period (or, to put it in other terms, the post-medieval era), and also that the seventeenth century was a major turning point for modernity in England and Europe[11], my thesis is aimed towards answering the following research questions:

- Was there a common pattern in the representations of motherhood that women elaborated through their private writings in seventeenth-century England?
- To what an extent did the religious context influence and/or determine the models of motherhood through which women represented themselves? What were the specific forms of Protestantism and Catholicism that determined the education of these women, their writings, and the raising of their children?
- How does motherhood express itself in the specific cases of Elizabeth Grymeston, Elizabeth Walker and Elizabeth Joscelin and Elizabeth Walker, and what is the contribution of each of them to our understanding of the roles of mothers in seventeenth-century England?
- In which ways were motherhood and death (or closeness to it) intertwining and determining factors for writing in the cases of Grymeston, Joscelin and Walker? Why was it crucial for so many mothers to summarise their attitudes towards life in the form of written legacies?

[11] To fully understand the importance of the seventeenth century as a key period for our concept of modernity, the work of Stephen Toulmin is unvaluable. Toulmin, Stephen: *Cosmópolis. El trasfondo de la modernidad*. Península. Barcelona, 1990.

- What were the forms of restraint (social, cultural, religious) in the way in which women such as Grymeston, Joscelin and Walker chose to write about themselves and their relationship with their children? And, conversely, were there any forms of release or relative freedom available to them in their society and culture?

In the course of my research, I have examined in detail as many seventeenth century manuscripts and printed texts as possible, in order to give an answer to these questions. In the thesis, I first try to establish a historical frame for the development of motherhood in England (chapter 1), and then I turn to particular instances of motherhood (chapters 2, 3, 4). Three women and their writings will be explored in detail in these chapters, as offering representative, though different, experiences of motherhood. These are Elizabeth Grymeston (1563-1603), Elizabeth Joscelin (1595-1622) and Elizabeth Walker (1623-1690). I will now justify the specific choices of these women as case studies for the thesis, while describing as well the methodological approach I have taken throughout.

III Methodological Approach

As I have already stated, my desire was to get as close as possible to the voices of these seventeenth-century women; to let them speak with their own voice, to proceed onwards after listening to them. My methodological options excluded from the outset, therefore, the possibilities of Marxism and also of New Historicism. These forms of writing about history and literature have not exhausted themselves yet: they have much to offer still. But the first of them seemed to be too focused on the political, and therefore might leave out important areas that I wanted to explore: the field of domesticity and of the life of the household. On the other hand, the postulates of New Historicism seem to be always too concerned with the mechanics of power, as if men and women had little agency or initiative. This might explain some of the relative scarcity of New Historical studies today; it seems that foucauldianism has its limits, after all.

These two possible approaches did not offer much to me, except in particular places and for specific, localized explanations. Even though I have not followed an outright feminist approach, I have certainly profited much form the feminist recovery of historical women's studies. A great part of the academic work that is being done in different universities of the world today is in great part a continuation of the massive archival work that, for the last 30 years at least, has been carried out throughout the West. To a certain extent, I would like to inscribe my work

within that specific methodological tradition, that tries to offer a precise recovery of the printings and other writings by women that have remained either lost or obscured by the circumstances.

I have also, modestly, tried to do so. The pages that follow are an example of serious archival work, undertaken in order to recover the voice of these women: whenever it has been possible to have an access to printed materials by these women, I have managed to do so. Most of the materials that will be discussed in the next pages will correspond to the books of advice, legacies or diaries that were printed shortly after the deaths of our mother protagonists. I will of course have recourse to the bibliography, more or less extensive, that has been written about them. But in general, most of the aspects I will be commenting here come from these original printings. Whenever it has been possible, when I have used other contemporary texts for commentary, these have also been extracted from their first original editions.

My methodological approach for this thesis has been based on three major concepts, that have dominated my writing at all times. First, the strong importance given to archival work involving direct research of first printings and (when necessary) manuscripts, which has involved digging out materials that have not been re-printed for centuries; second, an interpretative framework that gives a major significance to the culture of the period and its discourses on woman; and finally, the desire to make the small, private stories that are preserved in these documents the basis for larger (though cautious) historical speculations. I recognize in this methodology some slight influence of the "Annales" school, though never applied dogmatically, and the models of recent scholars such as Crawford, Ostovich and Sauer, and Ryrie.

The theoretical perspectives that I have chosen for my work, then, obviously consider and take into account basic feminist interpretations, but tries as well to avoid too narrow a focus on matters of gender. The complex present-day discourses on gender have originated an academic frame of mind that defines, alters and shapes a majority of historical approaches to the history of women. To understand extensively the debate that this categorization in history has created, the articles of Joan Hoff (1994) or Joanne Meyerowitz (2025) are very worth reading. As for me, I have simply tried to focus my work on a more balanced and empiricist analysis ("neutral" would probably be too strong a term), limiting this thesis to an interpretation of texts by women according to their *own* reality and frame of reference, not ours.

The archive that I have visited the most is the British Library, in London, where the vast majority of the primary sources for the thesis have been found. The difficulties of the cyber-attack suffered by this incredible archive in the year 2023 was an added obstacle from which that institution has not recovered completely yet. I have also visited several times the excellent Humanities and Social Sciences Library at Mc Gill University in Montreal, where I could consult great quantities of recent academic publications and all the new material, including unpublished theses from the world-wide academic system, that the British Library could not provide because of the cyberattack.

The limitations of this methodological approach have been many, as they inevitably are, in any kind of work that is undertaken seriously. First, the difficulty posed by the amount of published material that keeps accumulating in the physical libraries and on the world-wide web. New articles, books and journal articles are constantly appearing and offering all sorts of localized and specific details, but unfortunately the time of the researcher is limited, and sometimes one has to choose where to concentrate one's energy and time. Second, the frustrations that are brought about by occasionally unfruitful research. Some documents certainly seemed to be immensely interesting, but in the end turned out to be of no importance for my work. However, that decision often came *after* reading them, and precious time was wasted on them. And yet, I cannot complain of the work that I have done, especially of the archival work. Irrespective of the result, it has been a deep pleasure to get to spend so many hours in the company of women and mothers who, even speaking to us from the distance of several centuries, clearly were no less real, contradictory and complex than us.

IV The Structure of this Thesis

The present thesis is organized in four chapters. Before moving on, I will give a preliminary sketch of their intended content and aim within the whole structure.

Chapter 1 is a historical contextualization that will act as a framework for the reading of our three major authors or case studies. The aim of this chapter will be to establish the conditions of discourse that seventeenth century society had on women, especially mothers, and how mothers in turn responded to these conditions, taking into account that their response need not be seen as simply static, but as fully dynamic. Culture will not be presented here as something that mothers did passively acquire, but rather as something that they themselves constructed through their attitudes, their values, their responses to specific situations and, of

course, their writings. This is a two-sided game: on the one hand there are dominant mentalities, with their accompanying practices and sometimes their prejudices, but on the other there is the work of individuals, who keep working on these mentalities and rewriting them from their specific realities. As we shall see, it is of course possible to make generalizations (otherwise we would have no sense of collective history), but each of the individual cases we will discuss has its own context and in the end it resolves itself on its own, in irreducibly personal ways. This chapter will offer a general perspective on seventeenth- century English culture, but will go on to examine how this culture materialised itself differently in each case, in each family, in each individual.

Motherhood will be considered here, then, from the viewpoint of the dominant discourses of the time, giving a major room to religion. Protestantism had a major part to play here, operating as a main force in the change of mentalities, a function that it had been playing all through the sixteenth century; in order to assess the importance of this ideological change, the respective approaches to motherhood within these major religious divides on British soil will be considered, considering also different specific examples and testimonies as we go. The so-called motherly duties, or the expectations that a protestant society placed on women as mothers, need to be tackled here if we have to understand the pressures under which mothers had to behave if they wanted to achieve their goals adequately. Religion and the enormous importance it gave to writing among mothers is essential in seventeenth-century England, where prayers and devotional texts were usual forms of female literary production. A general understanding of the then-popular "Books of Advice" will here try to introduce the reader to a type of literature that was to become a trend among religious English mothers, and that is a pivotal factor in this thesis. These books were also connected with the realities of the death of children, which were common and part of everyday life; this also has led me to briefly explore the realities of pregnancy and loss, since these were at the heart of the mother's experience. The realities of barrenness and abortion will be considered as well as part of the potentially tragic results attending on the experience of trying to build a family in the seventeenth century. And here we will have to move even into medical discourse, which considered motherhood from the viewpoint of natural history, and inevitably projected some of its regular prejudices on it. I will take account of it duly.

Chapter 2 focuses on the first study case: the book called *Miscellanea, Meditations, Memoratives* by Elizabeth Grymeston (1563-1604; book published in 1604-10). The chapter aims to introduce the reader to a unique instance of

motherhood; a Catholic English mother who could not entirely accept a world of Protestants, but who had to coexist with them and was influenced by them; a mother who, at the threshold of death, decided to write a legacy for her son, Bernye. She and her work are worth studying since it was her text that, among a few others, started the tradition of *Books of Advice* published in England by women. Grymeston's case, although unique, must have been very similar to that of other mothers (Catholic ones) who found themselves trapped in the same position in England.

Grymeston, as a Renaissance woman, cites classic works but also many Christian poets such as Spenser, and of course the Bible, giving to the reader proof of her vast knowledge; sometimes, these quotes are in Latin. She did not always cite properly the authorship of the poems or texts not written by her (or did not do it at all); in fact, at the beginning she admits that "neither could I ever brooke to set downe that haltingly **in my broken stile**, which I found better expressed by a graver author" (Grymeston, 1604: A3r). But, far from this being considered an act of intellectual dishonesty, at the time was a simple question of practicality. Elaine V. Bellin claims that this display of knowledge is a basic trait of the English Renaissance, and at the same time there is a search within it "for an appropriately feminine persona, subject, and form" (Bellin, 1987: 269).

One of the many originalities of her book is that there were two different editions of it. The first one goes back to 1604; the second, which entered the Stationer's Register in January 1605 and was finally published in 1606[12], contained six more chapters. Since the book had been published posthumously, and there was a single author credited, what could have happened? It might well be that her husband took the opportunity of continuing a book that had passed censorship (since the writer was a mother on the verge of dying) and had taken the chance of giving an account of his profound beliefs, using her dead wife's voice. The originality of the case, the fact that Grymeston was a pioneer in a literary gender, as well as the many crucial aspects treated in her book (including political topics, as we shall see) make this text a fascinating entrance into seventeenth-century motherly devotion: "My dearest sonne, there is nothing so strong as the force of love; there is no love so forcible as the love of an affectionate mother to her naturall child" (Grymeston, 1604: A2r). The serious implications of her Catholicism in the writing (and editing) of her text will be examined in detail.

[12] The story of these publications has been studied in depth by the great scholar Megan Matchinske (Matchstinke 2002).

Chapter 3 is an approximation to another unique instance of motherhood. Elizabeth Joscelin (1596-1622); this is the only example in the thesis of a woman's work being addressed to an unborn child; that is, in fact, the title of her book: *The Mothers Legacy to her Vnborn Child* (1622). In this case there were strong editorial interferences between her manuscript and the final printed text. Luckily, in Joscelin's case, the original manuscript has been kept in the British Library; thanks to this, a fantastic job of comparison between the original manuscript and the printed edition has been conducted by Joan Le Drew Metcalfe[13], in which it is possible to reach a practically complete understanding of the differences existing between both documents. However, the chapter in this thesis does not focus on these differences, because the most relevant information for us is the state of mind of a woman who, realizing that was pregnant at last (after six years of barrenness), decided to buy a winding sheet and to start writing what could be called a prolonging of her motherhood. Elizabeth Joscelin would pass away nine days after giving birth to a daughter.

Her book is essential for the understanding of motherly duty and affection in the Puritan (radical Protestant) world. As Joscelin feels the duty of accompanying her child through the first stages of life but, at the same time, feels the imminence of her death, she experiences the unavoidable urgency of writing, of existing textually for this future orphan child. Compelled to the task, she imagines every hour of the day of her child: from the first light of morning until the very last minute before sleeping. In an effort that is still touching and moving for the present-day reader, she imagines being with the infant, giving him advice, consolation, comfort. The result is similar to a Book of Hours, but with a determined emphasis on the celebration of the Sabbath (surely, a proof of her Puritanism). This is the most fascinating aspect of this woman: she has been the first among them to write to an unborn child, and the first in transcending her absence through a maternal textuality that wants to substitute the physicality of a real mother.

Chapter 4 explores the last of my study cases: Elizabeth Walker (1623-1690). The aim of the chapter is to reach an understanding of motherhood from the point of view of a serious and dogmatic Protestant mother. The originality of this work lies in the act of post-mortem dialogism that the husband performs on his dead wife, since it was him, Anthony Walker, who decided to publish the written work she had completed during her life, after her passing. Instead of just delivering it for publication, the husband felt the necessity of creating an elaborate posthumous

[13] This extraordinary editorial work can be appreciated in Metcalfe's edition of Joscelin's text, *The Mothers Legacy to Her Vnborn Childe*, 2000.

dialogue, in which every written fragment authored by Elizabeth is accompanied by the comments and praise of the husband. There is a constant admiration towards her in what it seems to be the last act of love of the husband, who died only after completing a compelling collaborative book (published in printed form in 1690) of appreciation and respect.

The death of children is represented in excruciating terms in the case of the Walkers. Elizabeth gave birth to eleven children, and all of them passed away. The couple tried to yield to God's will without complaints, but perhaps because of this very strict restraint, the melancholy that is briefly glimpsed by the reader in Elizabeth's voice is even more appalling:

> *January* 23. 1669. Was a day of Mercy to me in the midst of my Affliction, being Lord's Day, my sweet *Mary* lying then Dead with us in the House; the extremity of my Affection forced me into the Chamber where she then lay, a *cold piece of Clay*: I there poured out my Soul to God in Prayer (…) (Walker, 1690: 101).

They lost every single child that they had: their grief, as can surely we imagine, was almost unbearable, yet it inserted itself quietly in their everyday lives. Because of this, the book can be taken as a clear and basic example of the Protestant attitude in front of life's hardships: they try to accept without complaining whatever it is that God decides for them. It is understood that the most important events in human life lie completely out of their individual scope of action. In this study case, the husband has a determining (though not absolute) role: however, his point of view is not, by any means, an obstacle to understanding Elizabeth's experience of motherhood. Quite the contrary, it offers us the opportunity of reaching a wider and more profound perspective on the family life of a protestant mother. The text constitutes, after all, a unique case of marital love and affection that makes us feel close to the actual difficulties of family life in seventeenth-century England.

After all of these chapters, and through all these different instances of one single but multi-faceted reality (seventeenth-century motherhood in England), I will hopefully be ready to give an answer to the various research questions formulated above, and which will structure the whole of my thesis.

V State of the Art

This section of the introduction aims to give the reader a general idea of the work that has been done by scholars so far on this subject, and the (modest) contribution that thesis attempts to offer to the state of the question now.

I will begin by mentioning some key references that must already be well-known to readers, but which cannot be bypassed. The classic studies by Lawrence Stone (1977), Ralph Houlbrooke (1988) and David Cressy (1997) have been essential to understand the society in which these women grew; Cressy, in particular, has given us a solid perspective on literacy rates in England at the time[14]. For the religious and historical events, the works by Patrick Collinson (2003) or Alec Ryrie (2017)[15] have been fundamental, but the perception both authors display on Protestantism is controversial: although their knowledge on the matter is beyond discussion, their unconditional support of the Protestant movement may perhaps be (and in Hill's case, has been) problematic. For a general history of England, I have relied on an excellent work, edited by Kenneth O. Morgan (1984). Although of course it has not been the only consulted general history, it has been of great use to me.

Without the second wave of feminism in the seventies[16] many of the great archival and research work on women (and *by* women) perhaps would have never happened. And, although since the French "Annales" School[17] the daily, ordinary life, and the history of common people aroused interest in the academic milieu, women had not been considered

as a topic worth of a parallel or separate study until later (if we consider women as a social group, and not prominent or distinguished women, who were the subject of many early modern books), with some exceptions to the rule: what can be regarded as the first work that analyzed the status and role of women in Seventeenth-Century England is the pioneer book by Alice Clark, *Working Life of*

[14] Particularly in Cressy, *Literacy and the social order,*1980.
[15] The title, *Protestants. The Radicals who made the Modern World*, seems to me to express many beliefs that probably go beyond the historical.
[16] What has been commonly called "Second wave feminism" occurred between 1960s and 1980s, and is perfectly traced and defined, for instance, in the chapter by Sue Thornnham, "Second Wave Feminism", included in Gamble 2001: 25-35.
[17] This school of historical methodology was founded in 1929 by Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch; as Richard Evans has put it, "by incorporating the methods of economics, sociology, and especially geography and statistics into their approach to the past, the Annales historians thought that it would be possible to make history far more objective and scientific than ever before" (Evans 1999: 32-33).

Women in the Seventeenth Century (1919)[18]. There are excellent articles and literature that studies the sudden apparition of women as a topic worth of consideration[19], but I will not dive into this matter here. I will just analyze the contribution of some authors to the state of the question and how they supported the work done in this thesis.

In the process of understanding and contextualizing female writers and writings, many scholars had a positive influence and made a great contribution to this thesis. I consider that the work led by James Daybell has been significant because his studies on women writings, especially letters, have been pioneer and broad. He examined more than 3000 letters in one of his key works, *Women Letter Writers in Tudor England* (Daybell, 2006), and his previous publications on the matter are very relevant (see also, for instance, Daybell, 2001). Other works tackling the topic of women writers in seventeenth-century England and that have become a classic are Sylvia Brown (1999), Betty Travitsky (1994, 2001), Marsha Urban (2002, 2006), Edith Snook (2007, 2017), Paula Macquade (2017, 2018), Raymond Anselment (2004, 2019), Felicity Dunworth (2010), Jean Le Drew Metcalfe (2000), or Patricia Phillipy (2018). Just as an example, Edith Snook has published a relatively recent work on English female writers of the century of unmeasured value: *Women, Reading, and the Cultural Politics of Early Modern England* (2017), in which the importance of these writers has been revisited and highlighted as a key, but sometimes, forgotten light in both history and literature. Helen Wilcox, as part of these great studies done in in the 90s, published a coherent and admirable work: *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700* (1996). She divided the edition in two sections: constructing women and writing women. That way, even though she counted with the cooperation of a varied group of scholars, she maintained an efficient cohesion throughout the work that gives strength to the result. Added to this, she offered the reader an excellent timeline at the beginning of the book, with the most relevant female publications on one column and historical relevant events in the other. It tackles many aspects that I had to work on, like maternity, books of advice, religion or writing and its relation with the "construction" of the self in women. An essential anthology that has been of the

[18]The complete work is online thanks to Project Gutenberg: https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/67936.

[19] To give one very specific and classic example, we cold quote Lerner, Gerda. "Placing Women in History: Definitions and Challenges." *Feminist Studies*, vol. 3, no. 1/2, 1975, pp. 5–14. *JSTOR*, https://doi.org/10.2307/3518951. Accessed 24 June 2025. In a similar vein, the journal *Feminist Studies* appeared in 1972 in the US, contributing to this enormous wave of new knowledge and investigation.

utmost importance to me is the compilation created by Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer (2004), that I have already commented in part 1 of this Introduction, along with the pioneering work of Patricia Crawford, to which I will be making constant reference all through this thesis.

I also was very interested in the history of childhood. The contributions that have helped me the most have been the ones by David Hunt, *Parents and Children in History* (1970) and the one edited by Anne French, *Early Modern Childhood: An Introduction* (2020), although the former gave me a very complete theoretical approach to infancy in his book that went beyond the expected. However, the compilation of studies that French offers is complete and diverse: it entails topics so important (but very much dismissed) as the pieces of furniture that were present at many European houses at the time; as an anecdote, I could not imagine that many children had lunch while standing on a small and practical tool for reaching items from the table (French, 2020: 39). This is just an instance to measure the importance of new studies that can shed new light on the lives of mothers and children, and clarify exactly the line that is thrown between them and us.

Early Modern motherhood has been the object of interest too in recent times. In 2016 Jennifer Heller published *The Mother's Legacy in Early Modern England* (2016)[20], in which 20 legacies actually written by women, from 1575 to 1673, are brilliantly explored. In 2011, a fantastic history of motherhood was published. Although the authors and the publishing house is anglophone, the country of study is France; and indeed France had an enormous influence in England, especially regarding medical treatises. Kirk D. Read has been the editor for *Birthing Bodies in Early Modern France* (Read, 2011), which was of great use to me when understanding the influences of some French authors in Jane Sharp's *Book of Midwives* (1671). In 2011 appeared a compilation by Micheline White, *English Women, Religion, and Textual Production, 1500–1625*, which gives new light on old texts. Felicity Dunworth published in 2010 a study on mothers on stage in the Early Modern times, *Mothers and Meaning on the Early Modern English Stage* (2010); that book has given support to many of my arguments with reference to Grymeston and Joscelin, and her contribution to the understanding of the public perception of motherhood in seventeenth-century England has been enormous. Other two relatively new works are focused too on motherhood and women's writing: Rebecca Davies' *Written Maternal Authority and Eighteenth-Century*

[20] The perception of children as being particularly prone to evil (rooted in Protestant beliefs on children in general) and the role of their mother's written legacies as crucial tools that could prevent them from developing that evil, are highlighted by Heller in a sharp analysis (Heller 2016: 5-6).

Education in Britain (2014) and Martine van Elk's *Early Modern Women's Writing* (2017). More recently, in 2022, and to prove how essential this topic is becoming, Eizabeth Scott-Baumann, Danielle Clarke and Sarah C.E. Ross have published The *Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Women's Writing in English, 1540-1700* (2022). And as a guide for finding and researching manuscripts, an invaluable help is Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson's *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing* (2016).

Several recent doctoral theses are also interested in motherhood in the Early Modern period, although not all of them are focused on England. For example, in 2024 the thesis *Maternal structures: Rhetoric and Representation of Motherhood in Medieval and Early Modern Spain* by Heftzi Marie Vázquez-Rodríguez was presented in Cornell University. Or *Performing Early Modern Women: 1610-1680,* that was presented in the University of Iowa in May 2024 by Maria Louise Capecchi. The latter has studied cases of female performance (ephemeral art and literature) to prove that "women used the religious and monarchical upheavals and their resulting cracks within England's social hierarchy to create opportunities for female authorship, performance, and publication" (Capecchi, 2024: 114). The present thesis will try to situate itself in this recent tradition, and to add some detailed analysis of the circumstances in which motherhood was performed: though, in my case, the analysis of it will be restricted to the written work of three specific women. My tendency will be, as I have already stated, to focus on the micro-historical.

Finally, among works written in Spanish and covering the whole European context, there are a few that have helped me to contextualize and understand women in general and women's education in particular. Joan Curbet's *Figuras del deseo femenino* (Curbet, 2014) is a compelling and suggestive effort to understand the representations of women from the twelfth century until the twentieth, whereas Alfredo Alvar's *Espejos de principes y avisos a princesas* (Alvar, 2021) is an ambitious analysis of the educational trends in Europe in general and in Spain in particular, and not only referred to the royal court.

In general, the state of the art now is remarkably clear: there are, as we can see, many new archival work, prestigious academic publications, and great discoveries like the two lost manuscripts of Alice Thornton, lost long ago in Durham and found again by Cordelia Beattie, in Durham Cathedral's archive[21]. However, there is a trend that has been unstoppable since the second feminism wave, the one I started

[21] This piece of news reached the daily press: https://hca.ed.ac.uk/news-events/news/lost-manuscript-found-in-cathedral-archives. Accessed on June 24th 2025.

this section with. The world has been divided into gender, shaped by the dominant idea of patriarchy, and ideology has marred once again what should be treated with impeccable (or as much as we can, at least) objectivity. The interpretation of the past should not be filtered and disturbed by our perception of reality. There are many instances, like the ones we are just about to explore, in which hierarchy, or patriarchal dominance, was not as clear as we, without the shadow of a doubt, have assessed since the last decades of twentieth century. In my work, I would like to challenge the "genderization" of history of women, offering a different interpretation of the past. The fact of having answered the same questions many times does not mean that every answer was correct. As Virginia Woolf once put it, quoting Coleridge: "If one is a man, still the woman part of his brain must have effect; and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous." (Woolf, 1929: 45).

To appropriately conclude this section, I would like to clarify my own theoretical frame of mind in this thesis. I am fond of archival work and the most possible neutral interpretation of the texts, and I consider that my position inclines towards positivism. I feel admiration for works that are conceived as a whole, but too often I have read mere compilations of articles that are not interrelated one to the other. I also feel detached from incohesive forms of history: a solid argument in an ambitious work is more appealing than short observations settled one after the other. However, my assertion does not dismiss any type of work, because a great perspective can very well appear in small and modest articles. Added to this, the historiographical division of history in genders, where the patriarchy has exerted absolute dominance and undeniable control over women is an assumption I disagree with. Although women were not in the public sphere as much as men, they had their own systems of dominance and control over men and their own *auctoritas*, even though, I repeat, in general was confined to the domestic sphere. In fact, history of humankind is more a history of cooperation than a continuous struggle for power, and cooperation precisely was a common trait in marriages. Otherwise, life would not have been possible.

There are two books, essentially unrelated to the topic of this thesis, that have helped me in my journey by encouraging me and conferring a sense of realism to what I do. First, *The Usefulness of the Useless* (2013), by Nuccio Ordine. He vindicates in this splendid work the significance of non-productive, carefree, unprofitable actions, in total freedom, as well as the importance of humanities in our ever-super-productive world. This defense of humanist knowledge is essential:

we need to preserve the history of our ancestors, the diaries of our mothers, the remembrance of our human families, their literature, their fears and hopes, we need to honor them by not forgetting them. In a world where sheer profit and constant productivity are the major assets, the labor of historians, philologists and scholars in general as guardians of our memory is more important than ever. My last recognition will be for a master: Santiago Ramón y Cajal. His *Reglas y consejos sobre investigación científica* (re-edited by the CSIC, 1999) has consoled and comforted me when I thought that my contribution to the scientific community was too humble or unimportant; Ramón y Cajal often said that there were no barren research matters at, since all depended on the persons tackling them. He also complained about the utilitarianism of society, that was in clear contradiction with the role of the wise, cultivated person who searched for an answer to new or eternal questions:

> Let us cultivate science for its own sake, without considering for the moment its applications. These always arrive, sometimes they take years, sometimes centuries. It matters little whether a scientific truth will be used by our children or grandchildren. The useless, even accepting the human point of view (with the necessary restrictions of time and place) does not exist in nature (Ramón y Cajal-CSIC, 1999: 39).

Ramón y Cajal wanted to remind us that there was an attractive power in sheer knowledge, an attraction in the discoveries that we come to, regardless of how much money they can provide or the usefulness of our research (or piece of art, something completely useless by productivity standards), and that no contribution is small, since each person is unique, and can give new points of view to enrich traditional perspectives.

And this is precisely what I have intended to do in the pages that follow.

Chapter 1

Being a Mother in Seventeenth Century England

1.1 Discourses, Contexts, Spaces

A turning point took place in England in the seventeenth century, in social and in political terms; one that had far-reaching consequences as far as women were concerned. We could consider that the modern world as we know it today traces its roots back to the seventeenth century. The institutional strengthening of Protestantism in the Church of England, as well as its many internal divisions into independent groups and sects, were crucial to a change in mentalities in what concerned woman and her social status. The radicalization of religious discourse before and during the years 1640-1660 (the years of the English civil war) had also its effects on female lives, and this was especially visible in their diaries and private writings. In this chapter, the relation of religious discourse with womanhood, the development of intimacy through the diaries and letters written by mothers, and the education and rearing of children will be the main aspects under discussion.

This first chapter will be concerned with the private lives of mothers, but especially with general approaches to womanhood, religious, social and even medical. It will try to offer a firm context for the chapters that follow, showing how there was a deep interconnection between public discourses on the female condition and the specific realities of seventeenth-century motherhood. Several of the texts that will make up our cultural context will in fact open areas of analysis that will later be explored in detail in our three major sources, and these areas of analysis will in turn beget questions that, I hope, will be answered by the thesis as a whole. First of all, to what extent did Protestantism and its many offshoots have a determining influence in the experience of motherhood in the seventeenth century? What was the representation (medical, religious, social) of motherhood among the English women of that century, and how was it reflected in their private writings? How did the medical or spiritual discourses on mothers, or addressed to them, affect their private experience? And finally, and in more general terms, how

did that experience (and its expression in writing) materialise itself in the development of what we call modernity? Was it relevant in its time?

It is obviously well-known and true that, in social terms, women were considered to be inferior to men in all spheres. In fact, the basic life of a woman had apparently not changed so much from the lives of those women of classic or Roman times, when they were given directly from their original family homes to the husband's household. As the early modern scholar Patricia Crawford has expressed it, "man was the measure of all things, and the female was a derivation from the norm, the "other" …What (women) could not be, in theory, was independent, autonomous, and female-focused." (Crawford, 1998: 17). Speaking generally, this sentence is certainly true, but I will try to show that there were several spaces in which a greater sense of agency could be opened by women, and that they even could be relatively autonomous or independent there: spaces that were won mostly through writing, and which offered a new concept of intimacy, bringing about a sense of inner freedom for women. Mothers knew, as I will show, how to take a special advantage of the new textual spaces that were open to them.

Since there are not many sources of information about motherhood through women belonging to the lower ranks of society, the records I have studied come from a minority in the middle-to-upper ranks. These writings are abundant and most often private: memoirs, diaries, letters, autobiographies (and these have been the basis, as we shall see, for most of the existent bibliography on motherhood in Early Modern England). But in the case of the present chapter, I have also given room to some key educative, religious or medical texts: after all, these defined the context in which these women were living, and their established the social context in which they developed. What we will see here is how a culture was slowly being established, and to what an extent mothers received it both passively and actively: passively, in the sense that their identities were often configured by that culture; and actively, in the sense that they often embraced it wholeheartedly, while taking advantage of the many possibilities for self-expression that it offered.

Different aspects of motherhood will be tackled in this chapter, concerning education, religion and medicine, and including biological realities like pregnancy or deliverance (with some attention given to abortion, menstruation or even death of the children or of the mother). But it is my intention to proceed in order, going from more abstract areas and towards more specific spaces and examples. I will therefore begin with some general perspective about the global impact of Protestantism, and moving from there to the specific context of seventeenth-century England. I will then concentrate on the dominant perspectives on childhood

and on women that became dominant in that area, putting a special emphasis on the function of the household (seen from a religious-political perspective) and on the specific cultural connection that was established between motherhood, religion and education, and which generated new social roles for mothers as educators. At that point I will examine how the intersection of religious discourse with the new concept of private writing offered mothers the possibility of narrating directly their experiences for their own sake and for that of others, and was at the basis of a new literary genre: the "Advice Book". The final parts of the chapter will be concerned with the dominant medical discourses and how they configured the specific lives of mothers, who also offered in their own writings their experiences of pregnancy, childbirth and (most tragically) loss.

Whenever possible, of course, I will be offering here direct testimonies coming from primary sources and manuscripts. After all, it is the aim of this thesis to come as close as possible to the experiences and voices of seventeenth–century mothers.

1.2 Mentalities and Motherhood in the Protestant World

In his powerful and influential study on the origins of capitalism, Max Weber expressed brilliantly the deep connection between Protestantism (including its many branches, like Puritanism or Presbyterianism) and the economic success that several Protestant nations reached in the seventeenth century (Weber, 2001: 45). He worked on two main ideas: one, the importance of individualism from that century onwards, and two, the cultural relationship that was established then between the concept of "grace" and the practice of a successful profession. Although Weber did not specifically mention women in his book, his main ideas are still essential today for any understanding of the mental revolution and the various changes in all aspects of life (including women and motherhood) in the late Renaissance. The transcendental change in mentalities taking place in the seventeenth century will help us to understand and explain the development of "the new mother"[22].

The essential solitude[23] of the Puritan believer - or in Europe, generally, of the Calvinist believer- was going to determine a more acute sense of individualism and of rationalism. This idea has been productively adopted by other scholars too, and

[22] This term is the title of one of the *colloquia* written by Erasmus in 1526 (Rummel ed., 1996: 156-173).

[23] I refer here to personal solitude, but also to institutional solitude, since the believers could not count on the guidance of a spiritual priest. In general terms, they were seen as standing alone with their souls and with the Bible.

in other directions: in *The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* (1990), Stephen Toulmin has argued that the figure of Descartes became culturally predominant in the Catholic world, with the weight of his philosophical work leaning on the contrast between rational discourse *versus* emotional discourse. Toulmin also remarks that, in fact, another European philosopher could have impregnated our mentalities: Michel de Montaigne. According to Toulmin, Montaigne worked on the world of intimacy and inner perceptions, basing his approach on the value of personal perspectives, whereas Descartes did not assert the value of feelings in themselves, but only that of rationality[24]. In this opposition of two completely different trends in European culture, it was rationalism (or cartesianism) that won the game, and the English Puritan world, in its own way and apart from the influence of French philosophers, echoed this tendency and offered its own version of it, in its approach to the material world.

Early modern and pre-capitalist mentalities (or traditional mentalities, as Max Weber called them) consider that work is just a means to subsist, something that individuals do to get what is necessary for them to keep living; the ultimate aim of work would then be just to live. If these pre-capitalist individuals had any other source of income, they would dedicate themselves to more attractive activities like hunting, war, or games (Abellán, 2001: 19). But the new businessmen of the early industrialized world needed workers who considered work as a goal itself, not just as a means for living (Weber, 2001: 45). A long process of re-education was necessary in order to change mentalities: during that process, qualified workers felt themselves oriented towards a profession, some goal that would be more transcendent and valuable than a simple job would be[25]. Work, to put it in the simplest of terms, came to be understood as nothing less than a moral duty. And the mother's moral duty, and also her main occupation and personal work, was keeping good care of the family and raising children properly, which meant raising them in the ways of God.

The Protestant world demanded from the believer nothing less than a complete regulation of life. This regulation had to enter in all spheres of life, private and public, and with an intensity from which no individual (if he aspired to salvation

[24] A good Hispanic researcher that has worked on this same topic is Josep Fontana, whose book *Historia: Análisis del Pasado y Proyecto Social* (1999) reveals the hidden links between Machiavelli as a political thinker and, among others, Galileo and Descartes, and meditates on the very notion of modernity.

[25] Luther understood profession as *Beruf,* a German word that means something similar to "vocation". He used it in a lay sense, a new sense (before him the word had the meaning of "religious calling"), and it implied a moral quality: daily work is religious and saint because is the only mean of life to live according to God (see Abellán, 2001: 25).

and grace) could escape. Protestantism (especially in its more radical branches, like Presbyterianism or Puritanism) implied an absolute control over the inner lives and behavior of believers. The role of women as mothers and housewives was to make children grow up in an atmosphere of purity, even of lay sanctity. And the reason for that search of piety was internal regulation, which created excellent citizens (men and women, each in their correspondent spheres of labour) without the necessity of stronger and external action. Religion relied mostly in this internal regulation, which came to be, for the institutional authorities, far more valuable and trustworthy than an external one would have been. In the case of women, this was facilitated by their keeping an account of their lives through their private writings. There was a social acceptance of what today would be seen as total subjection, and total submission to God and the needs of the family. That was women's work, and work had in fact become, as we have just seen, another feature of religion.

For Luther, once one has acquired God's grace, he or she can preserve it only by faith[26]. But for a Calvinist, predestination leaves no space for disquisitions about how to preserve faith or maintain it: only a small part of humanity is called for salvation. This doctrine (Weber commented "with its pathetic inhumanity", 2001: 119) leads to an existential solitude. There is no one to truly rely on in matters of faith (only, perhaps, in human matters); there is no priest whose authority can guarantee salvation (priests do not have the authority to do so); there is no sacrament that can heal the believer fully, because sacraments are only for the glorification of God. And, finally, in a sense there is actually no God, since Christ has only died for the chosen ones, not for everybody. And this solitude does, inevitably, contribute to a sense of growing individualism.

English theologians such as Richard Baxter (1615-1691) and Benjamin Bailey (1791-1871), recommended their readers not to trust anybody: only God must be seen as a true friend. As Bailey puts it, "it is an irrational act and not fit for a rational creature to love anyone farther than reason will allow us (…) It very often

[26] This idea reappears in many of Luther's works; for example, in *Concerning Christian Liberty*: "Christian faith has appeared to many an easy thing; nay, not a few even reckon it among the social virtues, as it were; and this they do because they have not made proof of it experimentally and have never tasted of what efficacy it is. For it is not possible for any man to write well about it, or to understand well what is rightly written, who has not at some time tasted of its spirit, under the pressure of tribulation; while he who has tasted of it, even to a very small extent, can never write, speak, think, or hear about it sufficiently. For it is a living fountain, springing up into eternal life, as Christ calls it in John iv." Martin Luther, 1520, edition published online in Project Gutenberg: https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1911/1911-h/1911-h.htm. Consulted on July 29th 2024.

taketh up men's minds so as to hinder their love of God"[27], an idea that suggests that the expression of too much affection (like the one a mother could feel for a child) was not becoming. Neither would, as we shall later see, the expression of too much pain in the terrible loss of infants. Baxter himself would (characteristically for a protestant priest) consider sin as anything that went against reason: not only passions, but also all affections that were unmeasured or irrational[28]. There was a confrontation going on within the very soul of each individual, a combat that in fact could be traced through self-examination and writing, as would become evident in the intimate writings of women.

Being useful was, in the Protestant world, of the utmost importance. Love for others could only be a service to the glory of God, not to the glory of the beloved one (which would indeed be an irrational act). Following this, the most prominent way in which individuals could prove their love for others was by fulfilling the appointed professional tasks, giving a useful service to others, to the Christian community. Furthermore, and again according to Richard Baxter, having a profession was necessary for believers to feel themselves "saved"; there was actually no way of knowing with full certainty whether one was saved or condemned, but the fact of working relentlessly and incessantly on an assigned profession could be taken as a possible sign of blessedness. Also, good acts, as irrelevant as they could be to obtain salvation, were another possible and valuable sign of grace. So, what we observe in this Protestant world is a need for systematic self-control, an eternal constraint of everyday acts, and women were not free of this sense of inner vigilance. This was logically extended to the domestic life, which was the province of women: the practice of pious life at every moment, the broadening of the sacred to all aspects of reality and the raising of children in a Christian manner were, too, valid signs of possible salvation.

Calvinism actually created a spiritual aristocracy that was not condescending with the reprobate, but rather the opposite: they were despised as enemies of God (Weber, 2001: 145). Furthermore, external or inner gestures of repentance could

[27] Quoted from Baxter, Richard, *The Christian Directory*, IV, p. 253. https://www.gutenberg.org/files/41633/41633-h/41633-h.htm. Consulted on April 14th 2023.

[28] For example; "Because that man being a reasonable creature, is accordingly to be dealt with, and by reason to be persuaded and overcome; God hath therefore endowed them with reason, that they might use it for him. One would think a reasonable creature should not go against the clearest and the greatest reason in the world, when it is set before him." Baxter, Sermon III. https://ccel.org/ccel/baxter/unconverted/unconverted.iii.iii.html. Consulted on July 29th 2024.

have no moral value, in a strict sense, for the Calvinist[29]; this implied a difference with the Lutherans, because for them grace could perhaps be recovered through repentance. For the English puritans, the sanctity of life embraced every aspect of human existence; some of them, in the Church of England, understood that the chosen ones could not gain any credit to themselves only through knowledge: they needed to practise constant piety. This was the reason why some of them started to form small congregations (called "conventicles") for the followers of the *praxis pietatis*; women were welcome to them, provided that they were silent (Pace, 2021: 3). These conventicles were, however, far from successful in social life: they soon became a laughingstock for the general population, as can be seen in several of Shakespeare's comedies[30].

In order to summarize briefly what has been stated until now, we can conclude by highlighting the importance of daily self-examination, which would inevitably lead to more individualism, rationalism, and restraint; but also the achievement of a new self-awareness, acquired mostly through self-examination (this will be particularly visible in writings by women). A new importance was now given to work, whether in the public sphere or in the domestic one, to the extent that it became a moral duty. A methodic lifestyle was the path for the salvation of the soul. Furthermore, God was the reason and the goal in everyday life, as well as the reason that helped to find meaning in the hardships of the world.

1.3 Protestant (and Catholic) Children –The English Context

In the Protestant world, children were often considered evil by nature. What the Romantic world would in the late eighteenth century perceive as childish innocence and purity, the Puritans saw as the active presence of sin. The theologian Lewis Bayly, towards the beginning of the century, asked "What is youth but an untamed beast?... Ape-like, delighting in nothing but in toyes and baubles?" (Bayly, 1620: 63)[31] That supposed depravity was reflected on the works by preachers such as John Winthrop, Thomas Goodwin (who considered himself a child as well as a hypocrite in his prayers) or Richard Kilby, who lamented "the evil seasoning of mine heart in my tender years", reproaching himself the fact of having enjoyed the

[29] Weber also quoted John Owen, one of Crowell's chaplains: "None but those who give evidence of being regenerated or holy persons, ought to be received or counted fit members of visible churches" (Weber 2001: 145).
[30] They are referenced, for instance, in Shakespeare's *Love's Labours Lost*, among others.
[31] The first edition of this work is of unknown date; the one that has survived is the third edition.

company of a pet (his dog) when, being only a child, he should have been loving God.[32] These are admittedly extreme examples, but they are illustrative of a form of thought that was indeed more extended than we might think today.

The scholar Anna French has recently offered new evidence that supports this idea and suggests that it was indeed spread all over England in the early seventeenth century. For instance, Sampson Price, in a 1624 funeral sermon entitled *The Two Twins of Birth and Death*, portrays the image of pure sin in a newborn baby:

> Man is borne miserable (…) Man commeth from the prison of his mothers wombe as a poore worme…most naked of all living creatures. Hee enters into the world bathed in bloud, an image of sinne, his first song is the lamentation of a sinner, weeping and sobbing.[33]

Instead of a bundle of joy, a child was a "bundle of sin"; and the very act of giving birth was often, in its physical uncleanliness, perceived as a proof of this impurity. Such a negative view of childhood conditioned to a very large extent the attitudes of English Protestants in the seventeenth century. For the most part, and for a long time, educative measures that tended to enhance a correct biblical upbringing were implemented, ate least in middle-class families. For instance, memorization of biblical texts was encouraged: getting the child to be familiar with the holy writings was of the utmost importance (which at the same time contributed to the sacrality of the book as a material and spiritual object). The fact of being given a book as a child was an essential rite of passage, and adults often left a written testimony of how glad they felt when finally they could own their own Bible. Reading itself was strongly encouraged by the parents: in a typical Protestant family, there were at least twice family prayers every day; in them, reading passages from the Bible was an absolutely essential activity. The younger members of the family were expected to remain still, which was not an easy task for very little children, and saying "Amen" at the end. Saying grace at the table was also a common task given to children. Families liked to be edified while eating, so that sometimes a servant or a child would read passages from the Bible: that was the perfect occasion for a child (in case he or she had memorized something) to recite the excerpt they had learnt by heart (Ryrie, 2020: 127). Communion usually took place was at the age of seventeen, though it is difficult to get factual information about how old children usually were when given their first communion. We have

[32] These examples are documented in Ryrie 2020: 122.
[33] The quote is reproduced in the anthology of early modern texts by Anna French, *Early Modern Childhood* (French 2020: 78).

testimonies of cases in which it occurred at the age of sixteen, and sometimes it could happen at later ages; this remained, in any case, a transcendental event in the life of the child.

Baptism, however, offered a source of possible conflict, since it implied in itself a theological and doctrinal contradiction. If children (and adults) are actually predestined, if only God knows their fate, and God is unfathomable to humankind, what was the true use of baptism? Everything seems to indicate that baptism entailed some sort of relief to the parents who had to suffer the loss of their children at a very young age: it was such a traditional consolation, offered to them since the times of Catholicism, that no father or mother would cease to practice it easily. Baptism was one of the two sacraments that were left in the Protestant world. Anna French has explored in depth the issue of baptism; offering specific figures. In her article, the figures that she presents (relying on Will Coster's numbers) for the city of London, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, are the following: 13% of children died in their first year of life; 9% during their first month; 4% in their first week and 2% during their first day of life (French, 2020: 75). If parents could not save their physical bodies, it is only logical that they would try to save, at least, their souls. In fact children who had been born prematurely, who had died shortly after birth or who had died without having been baptised were often not called "infants" but "creatures"; in general terms, it follows that baptism was still perceived as involving a cleansing of the original sin, and the real moment in which life began, when the child was welcome into the community. It was, therefore, a rite of passage.

For Protestants, baptism lost the form of exorcism that it had entailed at the beginning, in the original rites. Several of the elements that were traditionally present at the moment of baptism were still, in sixteenth century, holy water, a blessed font, a white gown for the child, candles and, of course, prayers and readings. But Protestants thought that the Catholic church was giving false hopes to the parents, making them believe that baptism would cleanse the soul of the child of all original sin and carry them directly to Heaven, in case they would die soon after birth. Furthermore, they also thought that the old-style ritual could imply that the gates of Heaven were being unfairly shut to those who had died deprived of baptism; and there was no reason why they could not be admitted to the heavenly afterlife too, if God decided it. So it was decided to simplify the ceremony; this new form of baptism was explained, in England, in the edition of 1552 of the *Book of Common Prayer*. The connotation of exorcism was completely removed from it, and there were no vague promises of eternity and salvation for

the baptised child. However, the ceremony certainly did still involve some hope for the future salvation of the child, and emergency baptisms were still usually practised (a rite that inevitably implied a certain belief in salvation through it). Against this persistent practice, the 1552 *Book of Common Prayer* recommended baptism to be celebrated only on the first Sunday or holy day taking place after birth. If the situation was so urgent that the child had a possibility of dying without baptism, even midwives could give the sacrament to the infant. And, although this emergency ritual was explicitly forbidden in 1604 (the Hampton Court Conference removed it entirely from the liturgy), it was still very widespread and commonly practised during the whole seventeenth century (in this respect, see French, 2020: 75).

It was a different matter altogether for Catholic families, who, partly because of doctrinal differences and partly because of tradition, had a different perception of childhood and of what it entailed. Even acknowledging firmly the existence of the original sin, education in the Catholic world was focused on preserving purity and holiness from the outside world, rather than fighting against the evil inside the child. There are obviously many counterexamples that could be found here, and several cases where the similarities outweigh the differences. But in general, highlighting inner guilt, self-examination and the life of the mind is a feature of the Protestant world, whereas the Catholic world can offer more tools to the self for escaping the absorption of sin.

Laurence Vaux published the first Catholic catechism in English, in the year of 1568. It was through these catechisms, elaborated in the question-answer form, that children learnt the basic rules of life and religion. There were 38 Catholic catechisms published between the years 1550 and 1700, taking in consideration both the translations of European catechisms and those originally written in English. Among all these, Robert Bellarmine's catechisms were the most famous; he wrote two, one for children (*Short Catechism*, 1614) and one for adults (*Ample Declaration of the Christian Doctrine*, 1604). In these catechisms, the sign of the cross is maintained (Protestants thought that it was a vain and useless superstition) because it was a reminder of two important doctrinal elements for Catholics: first, the death of Jesus Christ in the cross, and second, the belief in the three persons of the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Underwood, 157: 144). There was no Purgatory for children (for Protestants, there was no Purgatory at all); if they died, they went directly to Heaven if they had been correctly baptised, and if they had not, their souls were sent to limbo. To avoid this, the Catholic church urged parents to have their children baptised as soon as possible; in fact, midwives were allowed

to administer the sacrament at birth if death was an imminent danger for the child. (Underwood, 1957: 147). As we have seen, this specific practice was also commonly widespread among protestants. There were specific rites to be in a persecuted community as the Catholic community was in England. The first rite that a Catholic child should perform was recusancy, or the refusal to attend Protestant mass (which was mandatory), the second was reconciliation or absolution, by which baptised persons who had been outside the church (Protestants converts, mainly) became full members of the Catholic church and were able to receive the Eucharist.

The educational options for a Catholic child whose parents could not send him abroad were difficult. They had three options: attending Protestant schools in England, being taught by tutors in private tuition, or attending clandestine Catholic schools in England. None of these options was free from trouble. Some Protestants schools were publicly accused of recusancy; hiring a Catholic tutor was punished too, though many faked their Protestantism. And, regarding clandestine schools, and according to the classic study by Arthur Beales, there were 80 clandestine Catholic schools under Elizabeth I's rule, and 73 in the period from 1603 to 1642, the starting year of the English revolution (Beales, 1963: 83, 205, 215). Their existence depended on the discretion of families, teachers and students. The children of wealthy Catholic families had also the possibility of going abroad to study, at the English colleges established in Rome, Artois, Douai or Valladolid; and the convents and nunneries of the continent were always viable options for girls. All these options for Catholic education would be used more and more during the English revolution, the Interregnum and the parliamentarian rule, until the return of King Charles II and the Stuart dynasty at the end of the 1650s.

What all of this tells us can be summarized in the following way. First, it is clear that children of the seventeenth century were not idealized as they would be in later times; they were perceived in the culture as irrational and often empty of grace, and sometimes even as basic examples of the evil that was the inheritance of all of mankind. But, on the other hand, a corresponding system of rituals and of strict education was being implemented with them in mind: if children were seen as particularly prone to evil, family education and literacy were developed to an unprecedented degree, precisely in order to counteract these tendencies, and to ensure that they would have access to the word of God. In England the Bible was present at all levels in society, and the most adequate space to make it present was the household, where it could be learnt and partly memorised from the very early days of the believer. Education itself had to be biblically oriented, and this

contributed enormously to the spread of literacy during the seventeenth century. Ironically, then, it was in the period when the cultural consideration of children was at its lowest that they had a stronger education offered to them. It was a process that was oriented by a religious purpose, certainly, but which meant the acquisition of the capacity for reading and writing in numbers that had been unthinkable until then.

We have just commented on the central importance that was given to the household and to the family in the social construction of Protestantism. It is now time to turn towards it: it was, after all, the space where women were expected to exert legitimately whatever authority was given to them.

1.4 The Protestant Household and the Duties of Woman

In the Protestant world, as Patricia Crawford has put it, "the household was an extension of the church" (Crawford, 1993: 87). Both Luther and Calvin had understood that the home was the foundation of all sorts of instruction, and that it should be considered as the basic unit for the development of any form of Christian life. In 1529, Luther had published the *Enchiridion* or *Minor Catechism*; in it, he had briefly defined the meaning of the ten commandments and their interpretation as basic tenets in the education of any Christian. Also, he had explained there the meaning of the Credo and of the "Our Father", among other issues, giving it in the form of advice for praying in the morning or at night (Hannan, 2016: 3). Education in the Protestant world was oriented, from the *Enchyridion* onwards, towards a virtuous life, and understood as occurring first of all in the domestic world. And that was the space in which women were expected to exert their influence, and in which they were to supervise the education of their children, all through the process of the Reformation.

The main duty of English women in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was to teach children and to run the house, as Elizabeth Walker would say, "free from disturbing noise & distracting diversions" (1690: 168). Since families themselves were responsible for reading and commenting on the Bible, it was extremely important that education could reach everyone. Education among women accordingly spread, and the rates of literacy went up. As Anne Stott has explained it: "In the middle decades of the 16th century only 20% of adult males in England were able to sign their own names, and only 5% of women. By the end of the 17th century 50% of men could sign, and 25% of women. There was a long-term trend of growing literacy. The most reliable figures show a gradual though

not unbroken improvement in male literacy from 10% in 1500 to 25% in 1714 and 40% in 1750".[34] We also need to make a difference between reading and writing: it was far more common to know how to read than to know how to write. As Leonie Hannan has put it, "many women were taught to read without being taught to write, so for some women engagement with text began and ended with the read or spoken word" (Hannan, 2016: 3). Inevitably, women were still behind men in matters of literacy.

Education for women in seventeenth century England was generally carried out at home. Women of the emerging middle-class, among whom were the women that are going to be discussed in the central chapters of this thesis, did not attend university, nor were given the chance of receiving a solid humanistic grounding, in the same terms that men generally received. This did not mean that, in very specific cases, they did not achieve a good humanistic formation or that they did not have the tools to become good writers, who still deserve to be read today. It means, however, that according to the dominant worldview and following the indications of the great European Reformers, their specific duties (their *beruf*, to put it in Lutheran terms), had the household as their horizon. The education they received there was essentially oriented both to their practical duties at home and to the biblical grounding that they were expected to give to their children.

Of course, there were educators and humanist theorists who proposed some alternatives to this general model, but they were either ineffectual or eccentric, and did not have a major influence in English culture, ate least immediately. Most of these reached a bigger audience during the period of the English Revolution, as was the case of John Amos Comenius, whose major work was T*he Great Didactic*, first published in 1657. His figure had been relatively prominent in England since 1641, when he was requested by the English Parliament to join a commission in charge of modelling and changing the system of public education. Comenius argued that knowledge should be equally distributed, and that everybody should have free access to it, including women: "The most useful thing that the Holy Scriptures teach us in this connection is this, that there is no more certain way under the sun for the raising of sunken humanity than the proper education of the young" (Comenius, 1907: 24). Regarding women, Comenius defended their education, but once more it was just aimed to the household: "We are not advising that women be educated in such a way that their tendency to curiosity shall be developed, but

[34] Dr. Anne Stott shares an interesting website on *Early Modern Europe*. This post (2011) relies greatly on the research done by David Cressy (1977, 1980). Stott, Anne: "Literacy and education". Early Modern Europe. https://tinyurl.com/ymwe3mjw. Accessed on 12 July 2025.

so that their sincerity and contentedness may be increased, and this chiefly in those things which it becomes a woman to know and to do; that is to say, all that enables her to look after her household and to promote the welfare of her husband and her family" (Comenius, 1907: 68).

Comenius had envisaged four types of schools ("Mother-school", "Vernacular school", "Latin school" and the university); he argued that every village should have at least one of the first kind of these, for both boys and girls to attend. Comenius, however, also anticipated the critics of his perspective, and did so in strictly Protestant terms: what's the point of educating everyone, even women? On page 69 he writes: "If any asks "what will be the result if artisans, rustics, porters and even women become lettered?" I answer (…) they will learn to see, to praise, and to recognise God everywhere, even in the midst of their work and toil (…)" (Comenius, 1907: 69). Education was, even for progressive thinkers such as Comenius, a way to reach God and have a virtuous life: just as its aim was to have a Christian society, so it had to be in every way attuned to this objective. Helping female children to become virtuous wives and mothers was the reason to teach them. A century before Comenius, Juan Luis Vives, in his influential *Education of a Christian Woman* (published originally in Latin in 1523 and translated into English in 1529) urged women to learn, but not more than what was required: "Women should not show off or be proud of their knowledge", and he cites Saint Paul to reaffirm himself: "women should learn by being quiet with due subjection; her teaching I do not consent, nor having any authority over the male (…)." (Vives, 1944: 26-27). This treatise, though still dogmatically Catholic at its heart, had remained as a reference even through the process of the English Reformation, and it can be seen in retrospect as anticipating the effects of it on the whole cultural development of English women: on the one hand, their basic education should be (and was) encouraged, but on the other it was meant to serve God and the family, not the personal development of the female as an individual.

In the privacy of their homes (which was nevertheless often quite crowded, as we shall see in later chapters) women still had role models to follow: the lives of martyrs and of good Christians were abundantly produced and printed during this period, and they became often the favorite reading matter of housewives. We must observe, however, that the Virgin Mary, mother of Christ, was not among these role-models: her role and her function had been significantly lessened in the Protestant world. In an excellent book, Jaroslav Pelikan has explored the figure of Mary in the West, visually and culturally, coming to the conclusion that there was some degradation of her figure as the mother of God in the sixteenth and

seventeenth centuries[35]. In his words, "Protestantism has been said to encourage individualism, but no one has suggested that it did so for women... In fact, the Protestant teachings about marriage and the family strongly supported patriarchal authority" (Pelikan, 1996: 161). The figure of Mary obviously lost presence in the English public space in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and this seems to be paralleled by the loss of public presence of mothers in the social and political arena. But I disagree entirely with Pelikan on the matter of individualism: while it is certainly undeniable that patriarchal authority was, if anything, enhanced through the Reformation, it is also true that the lack of recognition and public presence of mothers did eventually generate a more individual and clear vision of selfhood among them. And this came about mostly through the exercise of private writing, which eventually found its way into the printing press, and hence into the public arena.

1.5 Mothers'Prayers

There was no gesture or attitude that was more common, more integrated in the everyday life of a Protestant believer, than prayer. There was no everyday event taking place in the life of a family, or in that of a single individual, that was not permeated by the act of prayer, or that was not celebrated or lamented in it. We could look for definitions of protestant prayer in the hundreds of theological treatises that were published during this century, but a simple and precise one can be found in a pious treatise by Michael Spark from 1627: prayer is a "familiar speech with God, in the name of Christ; in which wee eyther crave for needfull things or give thankes for things received (Spark, 1627: A3v)." This seems a gender-free definition, one which could be accepted by both men and women, and accepted equally by a convinced and demanding Puritan or by a common, unsophisticated member of the Church of England. But even though this simple concept of prayer could work perfectly well, a closer look at personal prayers shows that they could adopt an infinity of forms, and even a superficial look a prayers authored by women indicated that they could be quite revolutionary in their content and their form. Praying and piety gave women a unique space for their self-representation, as well as the opportunity to gain control over their own lives, the possibility of writing (writing that could sometimes lead to publication), and even the occasional opportunity of participating in politics.

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[35] His discussion of the topic occurs especially in pages 153-163 of Jaroslav Pelikan's study *Mary through the centuries*, Yale University Press, 1996.

There will be many forms and examples of prayers authored by women that will be discussed in the present thesis: the three authors that I have chosen as particularly representative of motherhood in this period offer continual examples of it, and prayer indeed is a very substantial part of their written work and of their self-definition as authors. As the scholar Edith Snook has put it, "prayers document the way. That religion permeated many aspects of early modern life, both public and private, spiritual and worldly." (Snook, 2007: 163). As it is, prayers permitted women to approach public matters in a humble and subjective way; they directed to God their own political concerns, together with all other private matters. And what is more immediately relevant to us: prayers were used to be taught and to teach others; they were a part of the essential duties that women were expected perform in the household. The act of prayer legitimates woman, both as a writer and as a mother.

Figure 1. Virgin and child with four angels, by Gerard David. Circa 1510. Source: Metropolitan Museum of Art.

Figure 2. The Virgin Mary with two angels, by Lucas Van Leyden, 1533. Washington DC National Gallery of Art. As she is depicted here, the Virgin Mary seems to lack majesty, even holiness.

In general terms, we could state that there was a basic difference in the ways in which Catholics and Protestants prayed. The rejected forms of praying for Protestants were "praying to Mary, saints, and images; praying in Latin, praying with beads, praying to or for the dead, and praying to go to Purgatory" (Snook, 2007: 172). The famous author of *The Mother's Blessing* (1616), Dorothy Leigh, did not want her family to be involved with any Catholic, and so she would "pray God that neither of you, nor any of yours may at any time marry with any of those, which holds such superstitions as they did, or as some doe now; as, namely, to pray to saints, to pray in Latin, to pray to go to Purgatory, & c." (cited in Snook, 2007: 172). Leigh prays for the English church, for the priests, and also prays so that one of her children could become a priest someday. Prayer itself was seen as an instrument of doctrinal and social change, and as the key for a happy life (which was also understood as a holy life); it was fundamental to teaching; and, as it was customary to teach at the house, it became essential to the process of learning. Middle-class women were in charge of teaching reading and writing not only to her children, but to the household servants too; there were many literate women who, after becoming mothers, would dedicate their days to write their own books of prayers.

Sometimes the manuscript works that have reached us show us dramatic vital trajectories, that have been registered through prayers. Anne Cromwell, for instance, wrote a 400-page book containing basic prayers, but also more directly personal ones. It seems that she was born around 1620, and her book is dated by her own hand in 1656; we do not know exactly when she died. And she openly prays to God for a child, in a time when a woman needed to be productive, not barren: "O Lord, I humble beseech thee heare mee in this request, if it be thy will (and yt I may beg it without offence) be pleased to bestow upon thy servant and handmaide, my husband and me, ye fruite of ye womb but if it be thy pleasure to grant us yt mercy, yt thy kingdom may be increased by it, or else oh Lord I desire it not" (quoted by Long, 2007: 189). Her mention of her husband expresses that she was well aware of the value of a child as a heir and, as Donna Long has put it, "as a proof of her husband's manhood" (Long, 2007: 189). In the same text there is another prayer (in the form of a poem, attributed by Long to Cromwell) which is entitled "Griefes farewell for an inheritor of joy", and that reveals the loss of a child. As a consolation, the author she recalls that the world is full of misery that departing from it is nothing but a relief, and she hopes to meet the baby "an other day". And finally, after that poem, there appears an unknown hand, this time

clearly not Cromwell's, noting that Anna and her husband died "without issue": seemingly, their wishes did not come true.

Long also studies the epitaph that Lady Russell (1528-1609), in Westminster Abbey, dedicated to her son Francis, an offspring to her marriage to John Russell. The death of the child implied not only a personal loss, but also a social and economic loss since, through it, there would be no male heirs for the Earl of Bedford. Russell, as a convinced Puritan, did not whine or complain too much, however:

Verses of the devastated mother Lady Elizabeth Russell on the death of her son:

> O comfort of a grandfather, a father's happiest desire,
> The very marrow of me, sad fate has taken you:
> Oh that, I the mother, lay dead, the light denied me,
> And he had first fulfilled my final rites!
> I weep in vain, for divine will itself has decreed that
> Alone, bereft of early things, I seek the spheres above.
> REST ON HIGH (Quoted in Long, 2007: 191)[36]

Mothers, then, looked for comfort in prayers, were taught by prayers and eventually dedicated themselves to write prayers. Praying often expressed their position of domestic confinement in the house, but also opened for them a door to the outside world (especially if that prayer was eventually published), and finally provided a justification for writing, teaching and existing.

1.6 Religion and Writing

Religion was the single most important influence and motivation for the diaries that women kept in England. Effie Botonaki, in her article "Seventeenth-Century Englishwomen's Spiritual Diaries: Self-Examination, Covenanting, and Account Keeping" (1999) has described precisely the spread of Protestantism and its direct relation with an increase in the number of women who wrote diaries. In fact, she states that the small number of diaries that we have is not representative of the total number of diaries that were written at the time: often, in the sermons that the priests gave when a woman passed away, we can read that the deceased person had kept diaries and other personal records. She also reckons that a spiritual diary was "probably the only form of writing that early modern women could pursue without

[36] The original text was in Latin, so it can be found a difference in translations.
Phillippy, Patricia (ed.). *Elizabeth Cooke Hoby Russell: The Writings of an English Sappho*. The Toronto Series, volumen 14. Toronto, 2011. Page 258.

ever having to excuse themselves for doing so. By keeping a spiritual diary, these women were at the same time obeying and undermining the rules applying to their gender position in a number of ways" (Botonaki, 1999: 4). As Christians (Protestants) could not ascertain whether they were going to be saved or not, the practice of keeping a diary was a way of looking for signs of grace. On the other hand, the Catholic functions of the priesthood (someone to confess to, a spiritual guide) did not exist in the Protestant world anymore, and this partially explains the need for self-examination and the abundance of manuals encouraging believers to keep a journal. Self-scrutiny became a written task, and one that was perceived as essential for the well-being of the individual believer.

Religious diaries were common in the seventeenth century, and they responded to the deep systematization of the moral behavior that most relevant theologians recommended. The good Christian has to examine permanently his/her state of grace, so there is no better way of obtaining control over it than keeping a diary. Diaries were recommended in both the Catholic and Protestant worlds, but the difference is that whereas Catholics used these diaries as the basis for a complete confession, and they were handed to the spiritual director (as Teresa of Avila would do[37]), Protestant believers were left alone in their spiritual world (see Weber, 2001: 147). They had to speculate how God would judge them. Maybe in this context, a diary like the one Elizabeth Mordaunt kept (with entries as if it was a commercial account of sins and good actions) can be better understood.

Diaries and autobiographies are profoundly related to motherhood, since sometimes mothers wrote not only for themselves, but also for their children. Writing was a perfect tool for teaching them, even beyond the author's personal death. The three concepts of Religion, motherhood and writing are bound together much more than was previously thought, as has been well established by Paula McQuade: "(…) we might need to think more deeply about the relationship between maternity and women's writing in Modern England. As mothers, women were responsible for the religious education of their household" (McQuade, 2018: 276).

Patricia Crawford (1993: 79-80) has explored the form that some key examples of this interconnection took in the form of several publications of the period. *The monument of matrons* (1582), by Thomas Bentley, consisted of three volumes that

[37] Santa Teresa wrote what was usually called in Spanish "cuentas de conciencia"; a 1888 edition of them can be consulted here:
https://bibliotecadigital.jcyl.es/es/catalogo_imagenes/grupo.do?path=10065104. The style there (even taking into account that it is a 19th century transcription) is completely different from what we observe in the English diaries written by women.

contained prayers by or for women in special circumstances like childbirth. Thomas Kempis's famous work, *The Imitation of Christ* (1418-1427), had many translations and these were meant for both Catholic and Protestant believers. Antonio Molina's *Treatise of Mental Prayer* (1608) was dedicated to Mother Mary Wiseman, Prioress of the English Monastery, and circulated mostly among Catholics. Books of spiritual guidance were therefore extremely very popular and very much read among women, who felt the need of increasing the number of said treatises. In the protestant world in general, the texts that were used as spiritual guidance recommended self-examination at night, before going to bed: this reinforced the idea of giving accounts to God, to see if the results of the day were according to what was expected. In several cases, the spiritual guides also offered several questions that would make the sinner understand how "well" or "poorly" he had performed his activities during the day. This was called "catechism": "Broadly defined, a catechism is any work on a religious subject in question-and-answer form" (McQuade, 2018: 282). These texts were quite popular in England, and some of them were written by women, or were integrated in some form into their writing: "Often included in maternal legacies, (…) over 250,000 catechisms were printed between the years 1540 and 1640 (…). Originally designed to provide basic religious instruction or, "milk for babies", ministerial catechisms evolved to serve a variety of functions in Seventeenth century England, including advanced scriptural interpretation, historical biblical education, and the summary of complex material" (McQuade, 2018: 282). For example, five pages of questions and answers appeared in Susannah Hopton's *Daily Devotions,* and in Elizabeth Burnet's *A Method of Devotion* there are three pages dedicated to these questions. The Presbyterian Mary Rich (1625-1678) wrote *Rules for a Holy Life* and kept a spiritual diary for 12 years. The questions in these guides explored the daily life of the believer in detail, since they woke up until they went to bed. Botonaki cites as examples of women who kept diaries Margaret Hoby (1570-1633), dedicated to these questions. The Presbyterian Mary Rich (1625-1678) wrote *Rules for a Holy Life* and kept a spiritual diary for 12 years. The questions in these guides explored the daily life of the believer in detail, since they woke up until they went to bed. Botonaki (1990: 3-21) cites as examples of women who kept diaries Margaret Hoby (1570-1633), Elizabeth Delaval (b. 1649), Elizabeth Bury (c. 1644- 1720), Elizabeth Burnet (1661-1709) and Sarah Savage (1664-1745). It is also interesting the formerly mentioned case of Elizabeth Mordaunt, in which we find two parts. The longest one, covering 22 years, consists mainly of prayers. The other part has a different format. It consists of almost day-to-day entries which are divided in two

columns: "To returne thanks for" and "To aske perden for." The very fact of keeping a diary, even though it was meant for spiritual life, gave women the possibility of intimacy with themselves: there they were free to evaluate and judge their own conduct, which gave them more independence and freedom. Gratitude towards God was especially important in all diaries, and the compilation of all God's favors was constant; there was a need for daily spiritual accountability. The diary of Elizabeth Walker (1623-1690), that we will examine in detail later, is titled "Some Memorials of God's Providences to my Husband, self, and Children" (1690), and even when all her children died except for one (who herself died in labour at the age of 24), she seems to be accepting God's will, and does not complain. Lady Anne Halkett, another example, divided the day into three, allowing five hours for devotion.

It is interesting that Antonia Fraser (1997) and Effie Botonaki (1999) should both reach the same idea: these religious diaries work like account books, "which records the progress of the transaction between the praying person/diarist and God (…). The language that women use to describe their relationship with God is the language of commerce and exchange" (Botonaki, 1999: 14). This blending of commercial language with religious discourse is not a coincidence, since in the seventeenth century England was moving fast towards a more mercantile economy, and those who adapted better to this kind of economy would have not only economic power but also political power. Protestantism was satisfied about the rise of industry, effort, work and commerce "Both Protestant ideology and the laws of marketplace encouraged meticulous account keeping. For the Protestant, the latter was a pathway to godliness, and for the merchant a pathway to prosperity, social climbing and political influence. (…) Both of them were signs of grace" (Botonaki, 1999: 16). Botonaki also states that this accountability responds logically to the sense of "covenanting" with God that has its roots in a basic feature of Christian faith: the existence of a covenant or pact between God and his people. It is curious noting that this accountability is also present in a Catholic like Elizabeth Grymeston: "If custome of sinning breede a habit of sinne in thee, and the more that thou do sinne, the greater is thy account, and the lesse art thou enabled to discharge it" (Grymeston, 1604: A8r). The idea of a scale to weight the good and bad deeds was deeply old and it was rooted deeply in Early Modern Europe, reaching back to the iconography of the Middle Ages.

Keeping a journal allowed women to also have more practical control over their lives, apart from reaching a better understanding of their everyday actions. Women could act as spiritual guides for themselves, as merchants and as lawyers, by the

simple act of reaching into their conscience and writing. A sense of intimacy, of privacy, appears as something that is newly developed in the seventeenth century. Women are building up their own spirit, their own agency and capacity of self-understanding. They decide whether their actions are good or not, whether they are going to invest their time into something or not; furthermore, the journal brings about the story-telling on their own lives: their marriages, their pregnancies, their giving birth to children. This could and did lead them to explain reality in their own way, or even to give advice to their children, as we saw in the case of Elizabeth Jocelyn. In conclusion, diaries are invaluable sources of intimate writing for women and mothers in this period: in them we can glimpse some aspects of their everyday lives, and in these lives motherhood was probably the most important task they needed to perform before God, society and their husbands and, most importantly, before themselves.

1.7 Private Letters

We have to make a brief aside in order to comment on the validity of private letters, in this context, as historical documents. This will only be a short commentary, and one that is necessarily limited here, but we need to mention it at this point as an adequate source of literary and biographical knowledge, since it can give extraordinary information about the circumstances of motherhood.

Letters have normally been regarded as a source of information on private matters, but the boundaries between public and private were not clearly well drawn in this period. Sometimes, letters were to be read in family, out loud, or even copied again after being read and send to acquaintances. According to Daybell, the word "private" itself might be referring to "the use of informal channels of power" (Daybell, 2006: 30). Leonnie Hannan, who has studied in depth seventeenth century familiar letters, coincides on this blurred boundary between private and public (Hannan, 2006: 9). Some letters were written with the intention of being read by a person or a group of people, whereas some others were addressed to a wider audience. And letters that were not meant to be published sometimes found their way into print as well.

Also, the notion of authorship was troublesome, and this is connected with the issue mentioned above. Was a document private when the ideas of a particular letter were circulating everywhere, and everybody could appropriate the thinking contianed in thems? What happened when the letters were dictated to an amanuensis or scribe? Privacy obviously did not exist in these cases. But the same

happened if other people, apart from the author, influenced the process of writing itself. Daybell affirms that sometimes, the act of writing a letter was a *collaborative* process (Daybell, 2006: 77-78). And as an example he presents two cases in which a woman was advised on how to write a letter to her husband. The first case is a letter written by the Earl of Essex, Robert Devereux (1565-1601), who wished to achieve reconciliation between his sister and her husband. He composed a letter entirely thought for the occasion, soothing the possible misunderstandings between the couple. The second case is a letter from Elizabeth Willoughby (1512-1562) to her husband, partially altered by her secretary (Daybell, 2006: 77-78). This proves that writing letters, sometimes, was not as private or intimate as we could consider at first; they often involved cooperation.

Added to this (and linked to the veracity or reliability of the letters) there were many manuals and handbooks that taught women (and men) how to write. The following books on the subject have been analyzed in depth in a remarkable study by Diana Barnes: Angel Day's letter-writing manual, *The English Secretary* (1586 and 1599)[38]; Michael Drayton's *Ovidian England's Heroicall Epistles* (1597); *The Secretary of Ladies* (1638), which was Jerome Hainhofer's translation of Jacques du Bosque's French letters of female friendship; *The Kings Cabinet Opened* (1645), a publication authorized by the Parliament and offering Charles I and Henrietta Maria's private letters; and Margaret Cavendish's two volumes of early restoration letters, *Sociable Letters and Philosophical Letters* (1664), among others (Barnes, 2013: 5). In fact, letter-writing was quite fashionable and, for some historians like Margaret Ezell, this was "an established literary form in the Renaissance and the seventeenth century" and a "highly conventional public forms of address" (Ezell, 1993: 34). Which makes us wonder to what an extent they were spontaneous and conversational. Or were they just perhaps a literary exercise, like the ones that Erasmus liked to play with his students, asking them to write letters "from women in the manner of Helen restraining Paris from an illicit love affair, or Penelope's letter to Ulysses"? (quoted in Daybell, 2006: 21). Can we consider the fact of writing a letter a spontaneous and totally individual activity? Perhaps not completely. Furthermore, these manuals for writing were not a specifically English phenomenon; we see the very same trend occurring in France and in Italy, as well as in Spain.[39]

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[38] Daybell gives another date for the first year of this book's publication (1595).

[39] For example, Juan de Yciar in Spain published in 1552 his *New Style of Writing Letters on Several topics* [*Nuevo estilo de escribir cartas mensajeras sobre diversas materias*], that went through many new editions in 1571, 1574 or 1780 (see Alvar 2005: 187-201).

The type of hand that should be used for a distinctly female handwriting was also established. For instance, Richard Mulcaster advised to teach the italic hand to girls in his *Positions for the training up of Children* (1581), as well as Martin Billingsley in *The Pens Excellencie* (1618). To these we could add *A Booke Containing Divers Sorts of Hands* (1569), by John de Beau & John Baildon, in which formal and informal hands were taught. There were also books that taught how to make ink or how to preserve the documents from rats or mice, as was the case of *A Booke of Secrets* (1596), or of Thomas Lupton's *Notable Things of Sundrie Sorts* (1579). Some women also had the ability of using multiple hands for the letters they wrote, depending on the formality of the situation or depending on who the addressee was (examples given in Daybell, 2006: 64-67).

The materials used for letters, for their writing or their transmission, represented the social status of writers: paper was quite expensive, while envelopes did not exist until the nineteenth century. Even the places where writers situated themselves when engaging in the composition of letters have been studied by modern-day scholars (Pender and Smith, 2004). But, for our particular subject, it is on the intimate plane that letter-writing and its development had interesting effects: it allows us to trace in detail the kind of relationships between mothers and their daughter and sons, sometimes with a great accuracy.

Letters from daughters to mothers in the Sixteenth century were written in a deferential way, and tended to reinforce the boundaries between each role. The daughters tend to show themselves humble and obedient, but they seemed to be more intimate that the correspondence with their fathers. Health, petitions of favours, arrangements for future trips or plans, justifications or declaration of intentions, household, nurses, servants…every single issue that we can think of could be part of the correspondence between a mother and her daughter. Daybell has focused on the brief study of the correspondence between Anne Clifford and her mother Margaret, countess of Cumberland, from 1614 to 1616. His findings reveal a very close relationship, in which Anne Clifford shares with her mother all her anguish because her husband is pushing her against her will, especially regarding an economic settlement, and threatening to leave her if she does act as he desires. In a very moving letter of the 20th of January 1616, Anne awaits impatiently for her mother's advice, explaining to her that she "will doe nothing with out your La[dyship's] knolledge therefor I beecich you let mee knoe your resolution as son as possible you may" (quoted in Daybell, 2006: 192).

The subject would require, probably, a whole study to be adequately considered. Taking into account only the topic of motherhood, and as a brief

example, I have included a few letters in the appendix that comes at the end of the present thesis[40].

1.8 Books of Advice

We are now moving into a topic that has major consequences for the rest of the thesis, since two of my key examples (discussed in chapters 3 and 4), belong to this literary category. This was indeed an extraordinary development in seventeenth-century representations of motherhood, and needs to be considered in some detail: I will do that in the pages that follow immediately, and then take up the subject when I reach chapters 3 and 4.

This topic has been studied in extensive detail by Marsha Urban in her book *Seventeenth-Century Mother's Advice Books* (Urban, 2006) and by Susan Staub, who compilated three important works of the genre and two letters in her book *Mother's Advice Books* (Staub, 2001); before them, Elaine V. Bellin discussed this category inside as part of a wider genre (Beillin, 1990) and Betty Travitsky had gathered and edited a further selection of texts (Travistsky, 2000). The books that Staub discusses in her compilation are *A Lady's Legacy to her Daughters* (1645), by Elizabeth Richardson; *The Legacy of a Dying Mother to her Mourning Children* (1672), by Susanna Bell; *The Mother's Blessing: Being Several Godly Admonitions given by a Mother unto her Children upon her Deathbed, a little before her Departure* (1685)[41], which is anonymous; a letter written by Mary Pennyman (from John Pennyman's *Instructions to his Children*, 1674) and a letter written by Elizabeth Walker in 1690, extracted from *The Holy Life of Elizabeth Walker*. The books of advice that are present in Marsha Urban's work are *Miscellanea, Meditations, Memoratives* (1604), by Elizabeth Grymeston; *The Mother's Blessing* (1616), by Dorothy Leigh; *The Mother's Legacie to Her Unborn Child* (1622), by Elizabeth Joscelin and *A Ladies Legacy to her Daughters* (1645) by Elizabeth Richardson. We will analyze in depth only one of these books (*Miscellanea*), since it offers a unique perspective on the interconnection between motherhood and religion. Furthermore, this is the very book that started the tradition of English women books of advice of the seventeenth century.

What was happening in the seventeenth century in England, for women to speak their minds out in a far more extensive and powerful way than before? Books of advice were already an established tradition in the classical world (Marcus

[40] See Appendix 1 at the end of this volume.
[41] Not to be mistaken with the equally titled work by Dorothy Leigh (1616).

Aurelius or Cicero are the key examples here), and there was some sixteenth century renewal of this tradition in the work of Thomas More. According to Hilda L. Smith, More was the best educator in the England of the sixteenth century, partially because of his affection towards his daughters. The qualities that More stressed above others in his educative writings were piety, modesty and Christian humility, and especially the encouragement to keep writing something every single day: "If you have nothing to write, then write about nothing everyday." (quoted in Smith, 2009: 21-22). Lord Halifax would similarly proceed to advice and educate his own daughters in his private writings and epistles, although he lacked the serious intellectual content of More's letters (Smith, 2009: 22). This renewal of spiritual guidance in the form of letters would finally evolve into adopting the shape of books of advice among women, since the very beginning of the seventeenth century: Elizabeth Grymeston's book was published posthumously in 1604, but was written in 1603.

Marsha Urban describes the seventeenth century with one word: turmoil (Urban, 2006: 36). Men were dominant in the public sphere, while women (although their lives changed a little) remained in the background, in the domestic sphere. But men wanted to dominate too this private world or even its appearance, through the male control on women's publication: these books were codes of adequate behavior for women. The tradition started in the Catholic world, with the famous *Education of the Christian woman*, by Luis Vives in 1523, but many others would follow it in England. For example, Richard Allestree's *The Ladies Calling*, published in 1673 or *The points of Huswifrie, united to the comfort of Husbandrie*, by Thomas Tusser in 1557, in *Five hundredth points of good husbandry*, or a bit later, in 1622, the very well-known *Of Domesticall Duties*, by William Gouge (about which I shall have more to say later on, in this same chapter). As we can see, men had a clear idea of what was expected from women, while women remained, generally speaking, in silence; however, this code of silence was broken when women started writing their own books of advice. It is true that these books had the form of didactic treatises and that they were mainly religious, so that in a way they remained still restricted to women's duties; but doubtless this was just the starting point of something else, a more general and far-reaching phenomenon. Women, in general, defended the patriarchal style of their society, as we mentioned before, but they made their voices be heard in their role of mothers, something that very rarely had happened before 1640 in England. The civil wars and the Commonwealth gave women the opportunity to make their voices be heard, their invisible ink made visible now.

According to Patricia Crawford there were two reasons for this: first, men were required to fight in the battlefield, so that mothers needed to defend their homes; secondly, the simple fact of having political arguments at a domestic level gave women more fluency in speech and discourse (Crawford, 1985: 213). So, the reasons for women starting to write these books of advice were many: the deep religious transformations the previous century had encouraged women in general, and mothers in particular, to read. Urban considers that Anglicans, Quakers and Puritans leant on mothers to educate their children in their variants of the religious creed, and they would soon need to read and interpret the Bible on their own, so that Protestantism contributed deeply to the spread literacy among women (Urban, 2006: 39) (though it is also true that Catholic figures such as Erasmus and Vives would also encourage women to read. Reading had become a necessity, especially among mothers: they were the first providers of education for children.

There was a clear rise in literacy among women during the process of the Reformation, although the works consulted based their conclusions on a classic study: the article by Lawrence Stone, that was published in 1969 (Stone, 1969: 69-139). In general, what we can say is that women were less literate than men, and, although literacy had a noticeable rise in the period 1650-1750, "it was only in London that female literacy breached 50%; elsewhere in the country, only about a quarter of women were classed as literate" (Hannan, 2016: 13). Hannan reminds us that the situation was different in the upper social ranks: there, among the aristocracy, a number as high as a 100% of reading women could be a distinct possibility (Hannan, 2026: 33). David Cressy (1977, 1980) has confirmed the figures previously given by Stone (1969) but in general there is common acceptation that there is a great difficulty in getting to know the exact, precise number of men and women who were fully literate in the seventeenth century. What we know for sure is that there was easily a larger number of women who were limited to reading than of women who also could write. The habit of reading out loud, and doing so as a form of family entertainment, often allowed women to read more.

For this kind of writers, publishing was not necessary. Writers could be well known only by manuscripts, but sometimes it was cheaper publishing than hiring an escribe: that is one of the reasons for publishing, according to Paula McQuade (2018: 280). In the case of preferring the manuscripts, they were copied, and readers made them circulate. The same thing happened with letters; the letters of Sévigné (1626-1696) were well known among her acquaintances and friends because they were copied and passed. In the case of mother's advice books, there was some intervention of the husbands at the time of publishing (especially in

Elizabeth Grymeston). In the case of Elizabeth Walker, as we shall see, was also the husband who decided to make of public domain the private papers of his wife. The case of Dorothy Leigh, *The Mother's Blessing* (1616), was special since she really had a desire for posterity, that is why she decided to dedicate the book to Lady Elizabeth of Bohemia, the second daughter of James I: she explains that once she had written the book for her three children, was at peace; she had given them a path to follow. But, "as no contentment in the world continueth long, so suddenly there arose a new care in my minde, how this scrole should be kept for my children, for they were too young to receive it, myself too old to keep it, men too wise to direct it to, the world too wicked to endure it." (Leigh, 1634: A3v). And, as an intuition from Heaven above, she decide to put her book under Elizabeth's protection: "I adventured to make your grace the Protectresse of this my Booke, knowing that if you would but suffer your name to be seen in it, Wisdome would allow of it, and all the wicked wind in the world could not blow it away." (Leigh, 1634: A4r and v.)

This lack of ambition regarding public acknowledgement is rooted in the idea that the domestic sphere was the adequate one for women, so many of them wrote manuscripts at home in the form of recipes or advice to their children. These texts have not survived as often as the published ones, which had many copies. On the other hand, scholars did not consider these domestic texts as something remarkable to examine until recently. Furthermore, publishing in the seventeenth century for a woman was a betrayal to her chastity and modesty, since publishing was something that men used to do, not women, as Dorothy Leigh put it in 1634: "But lest you should marvell, my children, why I doe not, according to the usual custome of women, exhort you by words and admonitions, rather than by writing: a thing so unusual among us (…)." (Leigh, 1634: 5).

Jackie Eales affirms that only 1% of all the material that was published in England during the seventeenth century was written by a woman (1998: 18). And, furthermore, in general these publications were prepared by men, so they could alter the text if something in them did not fit into the pious and chaste image they had of woman. But books of advice were an exception; as we have stated above, they were a transgression but also an acknowledgment of hierarchy (the father being the head of the family). They included prayers and meditations. They worked as a guide and a piece of advice that should outlast time. Writing books of advice was an act of defying death and overcoming its gloomy fate.

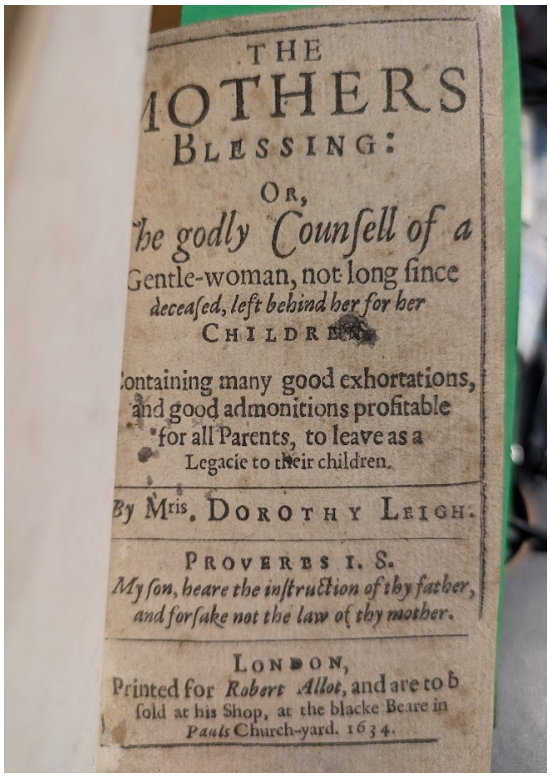
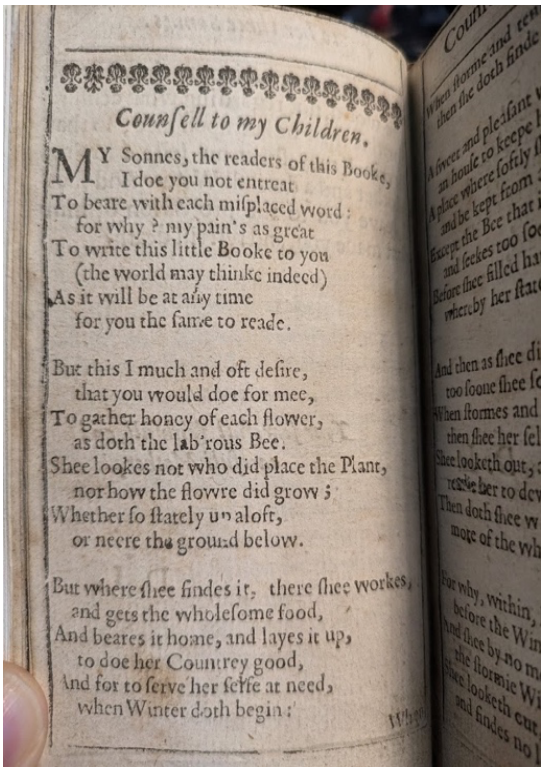

THE
MOTHERS
BLESSING:
OR,
The godly Counsell of a
Gentle-woman, not long since
deceased, left behind her for her
CHILDREN.
Containing many good exhortations,
and good admonitions profitable
for all Parents, to leave as a
Legacie to their children.
By Mris. DOROTHY LEIGH.
PROVERBS 1. 8.
My son, heare the instruction of thy father,
and forsake not the law of thy mother.
LONDON,
Printed for Robert Allot, and are to b
sold at his Shop, at the blacke Beare in
Pauls Church-yard. 1634.

Figure 3. Dorothy Leigh's *The Mothers Blessing*, in the 1634 edition. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.


Counsell to my Children.
MY Sonnes, the readers of this Booke,
I doe you not entreat
To beare with each misplaced word:
for why? my pain's as great
To write this little Booke to you
(the world may thinke indeed)
As it will be at any time
for you the same to reade.

But this I much and oft desire,
that you would doe for mee,
To gather honey of each flower,
as doth the labrous Bee.
Shee lookes not who did place the Plant,
nor how the flowre did grow;
Whether so stately up aloft,
or neere the ground below.

But where shee findes it, there shee workes,
and gets the wholesome food,
And beares it home, and layes it up,
to doe her Country good,
And for to serve her selfe at need,
when Winter doth begin:

Figure 4. Dorothy Leigh's dedicatory to her three children in the printed book. (1634) She is using here the metaphor of the bee that collects honey from many flowers, suggesting in a very humanistic way that ideas can come from different authors to nurture the self. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

In Susanna Bell's *The Legacy of a Dying Mother to her Mourning Children, Being the Experiences of Mrs. Susanna Bell, who died March 13,* 1672, the mother uses the example of her own life as a possible model of motherhood for Christian women who want to raise children in the principles of God[42]. However, Jacqueline Eales affirms that it was Thomas Brookes (who wrote the opening epistle of the book) who depicted her as a respectable mother and a model for the community (Eales, 2022: 4). She also analyzes in her article other women who wrote and that we can consider Puritans; Sarah Savage, Susanna Starr (whose son would emigrate to the colonies of New England and would be among the men who founded Harvard) and Mary Vere.

There is strong evidence, therefore, that books of advice written by mothers were a magnificent way of giving a written legacy to children, one that could

[42] The text is available online: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A27351.0001.001?rgn=main;view=fulltext . Accessed on 24 April, 2023.

remain and surpass the limits of life itself, the limits imposed by death. As a final note, we must indicate that there are also legacies that were written by men; as an example of them we should mention *The Young Man's Last Legacy, Left and Bequeathed Upon His Death-bed to His Dear Mother and Brethren. With His Last Dying Prayer,* published in 1686, and also *A Dying father's living legacy, to his loving son, or, lively rules for the rule of life, to be lived by every mother's child*, by F. S. Gent; the latter was published in 1660.

1.9 A Peculiar Case: Advice from an Elderly Woman

There is a very interesting case, studied by Marsha Urban and Patricia Crawford, that offers intergenerational advice: Anne Brockman. In 1709 she wrote a treatise on old age, entitled *Age rectified* (Urban, 2002; also, Crawford and Mendelson, 1998: 308)[43]. We will focus on this singular case for a moment, since it is a case not usually studied, and that can be easily classified in terms of genre as one book of advice too. In the case of Brockman, her inspiration for understanding old age better was a poem written by an anonymous catholic nun who gave some advice to the elders (in the fortunate case they reached that old age). That original poem can be very moving in its account of the subject of the failing body and mind:

> Lord, Thou knowest better than I know myself, that I am growing older will someday be old. Keep me from the fatal habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion. Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs. Make me thoughtful but not moody; helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it all, but Thou knowest Lord that I want a few friends at the end.
>
> Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point. Seal my lips on my aches and pains. They are increasing, and love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by. I dare not ask for grace enough to enjoy the tales of others' pains, but help me to endure them with patience.
>
> I dare not ask for improved memory, but for a growing humility and a lessening cocksureness when my memory seems to clash with the memories of others. Teach me the glorious lesson that

[43] Interestingly enough, here is a section in the British Library for recipes in the 17th century, and Brockman's mother's recipe book (her name was Anne Glyd) is there, fortunately: https://www.bl.uk/collection-guides/culinary-manuscripts-17th-century. Consulted on April 28th, 2023 (London, 1709).

> occasionally I may be mistaken. Keep me reasonably sweet; I do not want to be a saint-some of them are so hard to live with- but a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the devil. Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places, and talents in unexpected people. And, give me, Oh Lord, the grace to tell them so. Amen (Reproduced in Urban, 2006: 22).

In general, according to Urban, women were referred to as "Mother", "Mistress", "Goodwife" and "Widow". "Mother" was a term that referred to the female parent, but it could also refer in the tracts of the period to an elderly woman or to a stout or untidy woman. "Mistress" could refer to a prostitute, a woman that worked for the parish, or a woman of the household who had control over servants (the term "Lady", very much used in seventeenth century literature, does not appear in Urban's study). A woman was considered old when she reached the approximate age of fifty-two and a man was considered the same when he was over sixty (Urban, 2006: 21).

Aged women were a source of laughter in penny chapbooks, small pamphlets and broadsides. The images of older women that these cheap prints used to portray were of women that were physically ugly, never wise and purely evil: witchlike. Women became more masculine because of their lack of menstruation, and menstrual blood, since it did not come out, was supposed to poison the old woman inside. This lack of menstruation provoked what was called "mother fits", "strangulation" or "suffocation of the mother" (Crawford and Mendelson, 1998: 23).

For old women who were financially secure, old age did not present extreme difficulties. But it was not very different for women who had always been poor: they still had to work hard, but enduring more physical problems. "After the Protestant Revolution, parish charities had less support for the poor. Charity was for Catholics, so donations for the poor dropped. Some London companies, such as the London Company of Fishmongers, provided assistance for the elderly widows of company members, but this was one of the few" (Urban, 2006: 25). For women living without a system of support, old age could mean serious hardship.

Sometimes the old ladies lived alone, without any help of their grown-up children, who lived far away from them. Anne Brockman advises women to teach their children with kindness:

> Have we carried a very severe hand over our children, not only to restrain them from Evil (for so much it is certainly everyone's duty to do) but even to keep them at an awful distance, making them

> dread our displeasure for every childish fault, allowing them little familiarity in our company, loading ourselves obeyed without regarding the benefit of those we command? Or have we abated of these rigours as their reason or knowledge increased? For this ought to be unemployed and preferred (…) It is very hard for free born rationals to live always under awful checks and restraints (Brockman, 1709, in Urban, 2006: 95).

Old age, in the case of Brockman, was also seen as a solid motivation and justification for writing, and for advising other women.

1.10 Pregnancy and the Experience of Loss

I will turn now to the experience of motherhood from a more physical, material viewpoint. This must be considered in some detail here, since later on in this thesis we will face specific cases and situations which, as we will see, were entirely determined by the difficult physical experience of giving birth. And we will also consider in the final sections of this chapter the literature on pregnancy and midwifery, that reveals much of the dominant discourse (and sometimes, in fact, prejudice) that was projected on women from areas that were, supposedly, practical and proto-scientific. But let us begin by pregnancy itself.

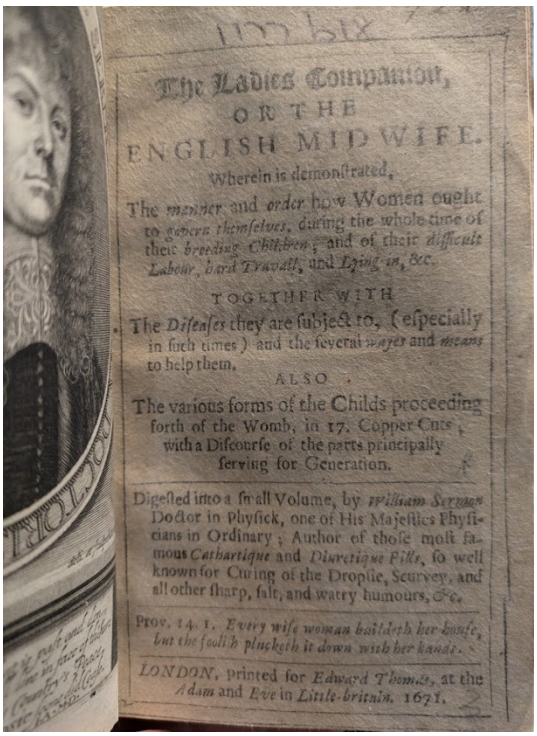
In a fascinating chapter, Antonia Fraser (1997) draws a map of English women that belonged to the upper social classes in the seventeenth century and their struggle for having babies. The most important task that was given to women in the European society of that time was to have children, to create a family, and to give religious principles to their offspring. Speaking in general terms, the common desire of women in that century was to have as many children as possible; according to Protestant ideology, the obligation of humanity was God's ordinance to increase and multiply and cover the earth. On the other hand, as infant mortality was tremendously common, it was necessary to give birth as many children as possible so that there could be some survivors that could reach early childhood. Marsha Urban estates in her book that "John Graunt in his *Observations* in 1662 estimated that 36% of Londoners died before the age of six" (Urban, 2006: 10). The case of Elizabeth Walker (1623-1690), that we will study in detail later, is quite tragic: she gave birth to eleven children. Nonetheless, only three daughters survived, but not for long: unfortunately, Mary died when she was six, young Elizabeth died at the age of sixteen, and Mrs. Walker's last daughter died giving birth to a child (Johnny) that was able to survive. He was much beloved by his grandmother, since he was the only descendent left after her eleven pregnancies (see

Fraser, 1997: 67). We will, of course, discuss this particular case in further detail later in the thesis.

As, according to the book of Genesis, God had told humanity to reproduce themselves, being barren was considered a curse. Women themselves sometimes reveal how psychologically pressing was not being able to get pregnant: the diary of Sarah Savage (1664-1752)[44] where we can "trace a pattern of her alternating hopes of pregnancy and disappointments" (Crawford, 1998: 150), although eventually she was able to become a mother. Another woman who wrote about the importance of having many children was Elizabeth, Viscountess Mordaunt (1632-1679). She wrote at the request of her spiritual advisor, and she referred constantly within it to the "Great Blessing of many Children"; she gave birth to seven sons and four daughters (Fraser, 1997: 66). Curiously enough, Mordaunt wrote her diary as if it was an account of spending and earning, so that it was divided into two columns: one to thank God for different things and the other to ask for his forgiveness for different transgressions (Fraser, 1997: 68). Every manual and every almanac offered remedies for infertility, many of them with a long history of success; for, as William Sermon wrote in *The Ladies Companion*, or *The English Midwife* in 1671: "The Ancients (not being ignorant of what this sex principally desire) have left several wayes for the accomplishment of the same" (Sermon, 1671: 7).[45]

[44] The diaries by Savage are published online: https://ia800109.us.archive.org/26/items/memoirsoflifechoowill/memoirsoflifechoowill.pdf. Accessed on December 6th, 2023. For example, she would write on December 29th, 1705: "I became the mother of a dead son. My God was to me a present help, as he has been many times in like circumstances. I adore his wisdom in choosing this rod to beat me with; he is righteous, nay, gracious. I would be thankful that he has spared me" (p. 214).

[45] Sermon, William. *The Ladies Companion or The English Midwife*. 1671. P.7. B4. His book can also be found online; https://tinyurl.com/yq3z8997



The Ladies Companion,
OR THE
ENGLISH MIDWIFE.
Wherein is demonstrated,
The manner and order how Women ought to govern themselves, during the whole time of their breeding Children; and of their difficult Labour, hard Travail, and Lying in, &c.
TOGETHER WITH
The Diseases they are subject to, (especially in such times) and the several ways and means to help them.
ALSO
The various forms of the Childs proceeding forth of the Womb, in 17. Copper Cuts; with a Discourse of the parts principally serving for Generation.
Digested into a small Volume, by William Sermon Doctor in Physick, one of His Majesties Physicians in Ordinary; Author of those most famous Cathartique and Diuretique Pills, so well known for Curing of the Dropsie, Scurvey, and all other sharp, salt, and watry humours, &c.
Prov. 14. 1. Every wise woman buildeth her house, but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands.
LONDON, printed for Edward Thomas, at the Adam and Eve in Little-britain. 1671.

Figure 5. William Sermon: *The Ladies Companion*, 1671. A manual intended to help both mothers and midwives. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

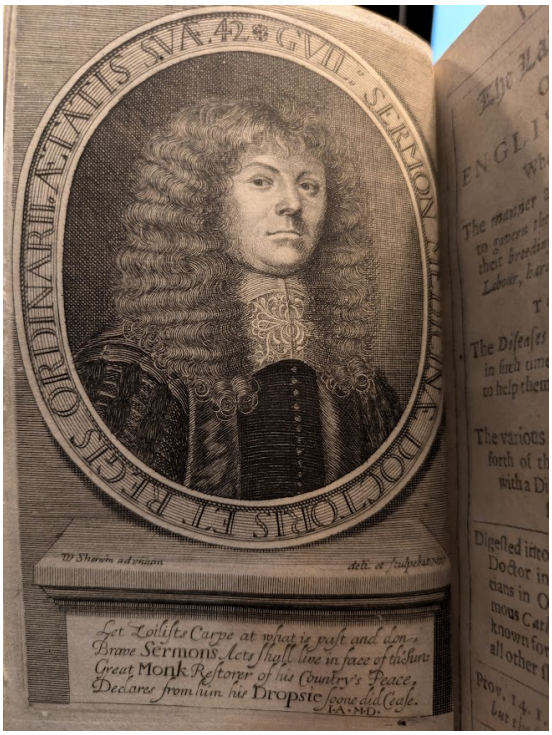


Figure 6. Engraving depicting the portrait of Reverend William Sermon. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

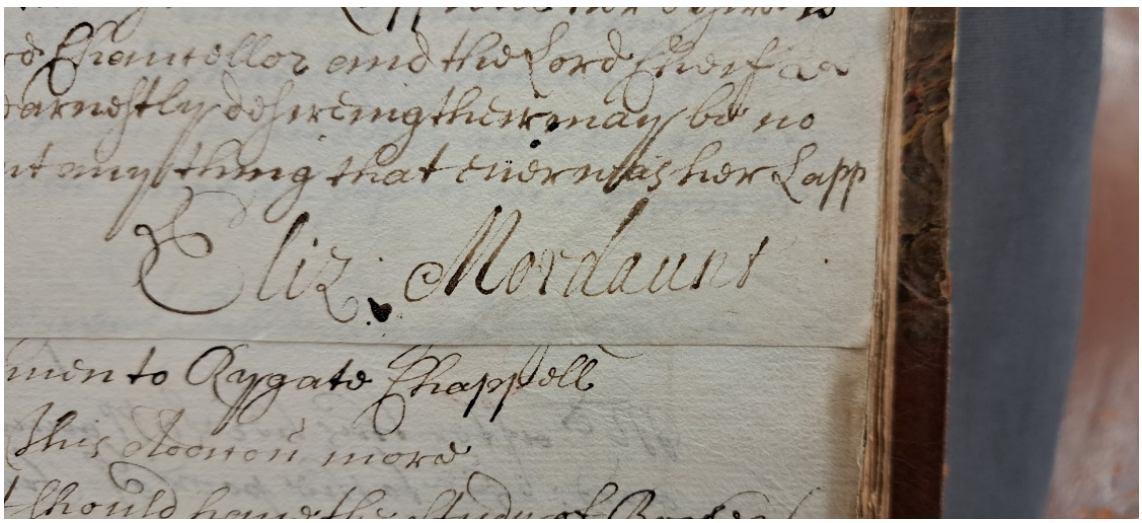


Figure 7. The will of Viscountess of Mordaunt, who also authored a famous diary. Bl. Add MS 17018:1675-1685. Fol. 129. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

A curious remedy for infertility, among many others, is explained there: "Take the shift and all clothes that haue been made use of during the time of the womans monethly purgation, and wash them out in new milk, and give the milk to sucking pigs, and hang up the clothes so washed upon a hedge & c. in the Air, for some time, day and night, by which means women become fruitful." (Sermon, 1671: 13-14). Sermon gave an expression of many homelike remedies, and he gives answers to every question regarding women and children. For example, if a woman wanted to know whether she was expecting a boy or a girl, all that she had to do was to keep her first urine and to mix it with "as much Clarret wine, and let them stand together 24 hours, and if there appear in the bottom a thick gross cloud like to the colour of Bean-broth, it signifies the woman to be with child of a boy" (Sermon, 1671: 28).

Since many women did not dare to write in spite of being perfectly literate, some men would take the lead and write for them; presumably, they did not do this merely to be helpful, but to keep the leadership in all spheres of life, including motherhood and the various aspects of the female world. That is why we have such uncommon acts of authorship tasks undertaken by men as writing books of recipes, or needling books or midwifery books, as Sermon did. However, in the very same year that William Sermon's book was published, another treaty on housewifery appeared; it was *The Midwives Book*[46] by Jane Sharp (1671). This treatise also contained some tricks about distinguishing whether barrenness in a couple comes from the man or the woman: "The best experiment that euer I could find, was to take some small quantity of Barley, or any other corn that will soon grow, and soak part of it in the mans urine, and part in the womans urine, for a whole day and a night. Then take the corn out of both their Urines and lay them apart upon some floor, or in parts where it may dry, and in euery morning water them both with their own (…): that corns that grows first is the most fruitful, and so is the person was urine was the cause of it" (Sharp, 1671: 164).

Getting pregnant before a wedding was a potential disaster for women, and they often, in these cases, tried to get to the civil court the man who was responsible for their situation (Hardwick, 2018: 317). Abortion and infanticide were far from being uncommon: "Women may have found that abortion and infanticide were more certain methods of controlling fertility" (Crawford, 1985: 150). But

[46] The respective introductions of both books are so dissimilar that it mya be shocking today. William Sermon shows himself very sure of his righteousness and of his service to England with this publication; Jane Sharp, on the other hand, is much humbler, even though she assures that she has already translated many different works from French, Dutch and Italian. However, both authors look for a better understanding of the process of bearing and delivering children.

infanticide itself was considered a crime, and in 1624 the Parliament passed a law that was called "Act to Prevent the Murthering of Bastard Children"; it established that a mother needed to have a witness to confess that the child had been born dead, otherwise she would be accused of having committed assassination of her child (Sharpe, 1984: 55). Sometimes, the wetnurse herself acted as the witness of the birth. Several cases of this kind are well studied in the areas of Middlesex, Sussex, Hertfordshire, Cheshire, Essex, Devon, Cornwall and Norfolk, between the years 1550-1749 (Sharpe, 1984: 56). Since having a child while unmarried implied a strong social stigma, women preferred sometimes to get rid of the baby; premature death among babies was such a common phenomenon that they used it in their favor.

But not all murdered children were babies. In seventeenth-century England religion was a matter of life or death, as several documented examples prove. Betty S. Travitsky has studied some instances of English filicide, and she makes an important distinction between it and infanticide, a term that did not appear in the English law until 1938 since it considered these cases a murder, regardless of the age of the victim (Travistsky, 1994: 56). A woman called Margaret (Day) Vincent, married to Jarvis Vincent, had been indoctrinated by a Jesuit to raise her children in the Catholic faith, but her husband was Protestant; she decided therefore to put an end to the lives of two of her three children (the youngest was being nursed on that very day, Holy Thursday, 9th of May 1616) before having to raise them in the Protestant faith. She also tried to commit suicide, but the maid returned to the household before she could fulfil her desire Margaret Vincent paid for her crime with her life (Travitsky, 1994: 56).

Fear of dying during childbirth was also a common topic. We can sense that in the fabulous letter written to her husband by Elizabeth Joscelin (1595-1622), a letter that opens her book *The Mother's Legacy to her Unborn Childe* in 1622. Joscelin follows the tradition of Books of advice that Elizabeth Grymeston would start in 1604: she was pregnant when she decided to write her book, and she explained that the work was motivated by her fear that she might not survive her child. It was a work that intended to ensure the salvation of her baby: nothing less than a moral guide for life. She also felt the need of giving some advice to her husband on their child, regarding nurses, discipline, education, or the importance of modest dress for children (Urban, 2006: 16). Finally, Joscelin's fears became true and, unfortunately, she passed away in the deliverance of her baby.

Infant mortality was higher among the upper classes than among the lower ranks, and it was mostly due, though not exclusively, to the problem of

breastfeeding. Jane Sharp (1671), in an essay that we shall examine later on in this same chapter, wrote that "the usual way for rich people is to put forth their children to nurse, but that is a remedy that needs remedy…because it changeth the natural disposition of the child, and often times exposeth the infant to many hasards" (1671: 353). Jane Sharp, as we have stated above, was the first woman defying the conventional tradition of men writing obstetric essays and writing one herself. As she put it:

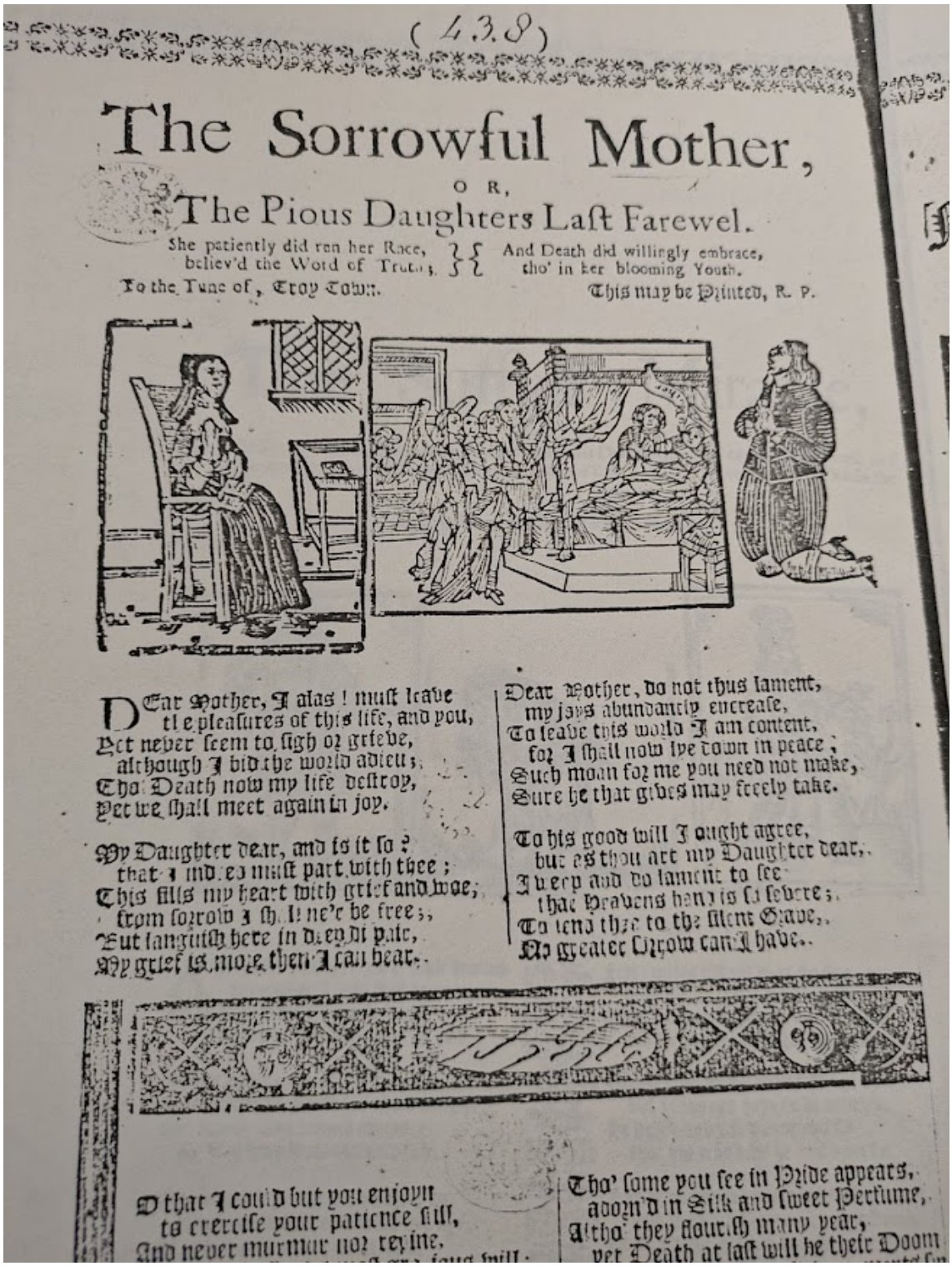
> Some perhaps may think, that then it is not proper for women to be of this profession, because they cannot attain so rarely to the knowledge of things as men may, who are bred up in Universities, Schools of learning, or serve their Apprentiships for that end and purpose, where Anatomy Lectures being frequently read, the situation of the parts both of men and women, and other things of great consequence are often made plain to them. But that *Objection* is easily answered, by the former example of the Midwives amongst the *Israelites*, for though we women cannot deny, that men in some things may come to a greater perfection of knowledge than women ordinarily can, by reason of the former helps that women want; yet the holy Scriptures hath recorded Midwives to the perpetual honour of the female Sex (Sharp: 2-3).

She stated that women should not let wetnurses to breastfeed their children, but it was frequent. In these cases, the bonding and the affection between mother and child was, of course, irretrievably lost.

But breastfeeding or the carelessness of wetnurses were not the only reason for such high infant mortality; many illnesses like smallpox could take away children of any age. There is a tender poem ("The Pious Daughter") in the book of *Ballads* compiled by Robert Harley, Earl of Oxford, between 1672 and 1696, that represents the dialogue between a dying daughter and a mournful mother. The mother seems to be initially serene to the daughter, but she later discovers to us her own sadness in her loss ("My griefe is more than I can bear"):

> Dear Mother, I alas! must leave
> The pleasures of this life, and you,
> Yet never seem to sigh or grieve,
> Although I bid the world adieu:
> The Death now my life destroy,
> Yet we shall meet again in joy.[47]

[47] Harley, Robert: "The Pious Daughter". *Ballads*. 1672-1696. BL. Ref: c.20.f.8. (438).



(4.3.8)

The Sorrowful Mother,

OR,

The Pious Daughters Last Farewel.

She patiently did run her Race, believ'd the Word of Truth; And Death did willingly embrace, tho' in her blooming Youth.

To the Tune of, Troy Town. This may be Printed, R. P.

DEar Mother, Alas! must leave
the pleasures of this life, and you,
Yet never seem to sigh or grieve,
although I bid the world adieu;
Tho' Death now my life destroy,
Yet we shall meet again in joy.

My Daughter dear, and is it so?
that I indeed must part with thee;
This fills my heart with grief and woe;
from sorrow I shall ne'er be free;
But languish here in deep distress,
My grief is more then I can bear.

Dear Mother, do not thus lament,
my joys abundantly encrease,
To leave this world I am content,
for I shall now lye down in peace;
Such moan for me you need not make,
Sure he that gives may freely take.

To his good will I ought agree,
but as thou art my Daughter dear,
I weep and do lament to see
that Heavens hand is so severe;
To send thee to the silent Grave,
No greater Sorrow can I have.

O that I could but you enjoyn
to exercise your patience still,
And never murmur nor repine,

Tho' some you see in Pride appears,
adorn'd in Silk and sweet Perfume,
Altho' they flourish many year,
yet Death at last will be their Doom

Figure 8. "The sorrowful Mother" or "The Pious Daughter", in the Collection of Ballads by Robert Harley (1672-1696). C.20.f.8 (438). Death and motherhood seemed to be inextricably joined. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

Pregnancy had also a more complex social sense, at the same time private and public: it was the public and clear expression of the existence of sexual intimacy in the couple. This implied an actual asset for the father: it meant that he was able to give pleasure to his wife, since according to the dominant medical discourse there could be no conception without female pleasure [48]. It also was thought, following the Pauline teachings, to bring union to the married couple; however, barrenness was blamed on women (Pollock, 2013: 41).

How did women come to realize that they were pregnant? Although there were some medical techniques like the urine tests, women had several ways to determine if they were actually with child; amenorrhea, quickening, the size of the abdomen, and increasing pains as the end was closer (Pollock, 2013: 44). The preparation for the moment of delivery was mental (trying to overcome fear) and physical[49]. Regarding physical preparation, food had to be adequate: this meant that salty and spicy foods had to be avoided, as well as alcohol. Resting was crucial, and travelling while pregnant was the most important thing to avoid; if there was a danger of miscarriage, women had to be confined to their bedrooms. There were remedies for warding off miscarriages; we will discover, later in this same thesis, how Elizabeth Walker was an expert on those remedies. Since access to professional practitioners was not easy, home remedies were a most handy resource. Finally, women felt safer when they knew that their husbands were close; not in the room, but at least in the house. Furthermore, the husbands were required to treat to their spouses tenderly in the period of pregnancy; as William Gouge wrote in *Of domestical duties* in 1622, "Husbands (…) must be very tender over their wives, and helpful to them in all things needful" (Quoted in Pollock, 2013: 52).

We can thus conclude that there was a powerful desire for getting pregnant, but at the same time there was much fear of the outcome. Women knew that they were confronting death every time they had to deliver a child. It is not a surprise that those fears are strongly commented in the diaries or letters that women kept, and that these diaries became a form of spiritual guidance for strength of mind and forgiveness. The example of one woman could be used by many: that is one of the

[48] "There were several theories about the process of conception. Earlier in the century one popular theory posited that a child was conceived from a mixture of both male and female seed emitted during intercourse. Accordingly, since female sexual pleasure was generally accounted necessary for conception, in the first half of the 17th century it followed that a husband wanting children would consider his wife's sexual pleasure" (Crawford 2013: 7).

[49] "Expecting a child in early modern society was an uncomfortable condition, bringing pain and anxiety to the prospective mother. The maternal mortality rate was certainly lower than we may have thought, but to women, their relatives and spouses, the prospect of not surviving a birth was very real." (Pollock 2013: 49).

reasons why books of advice were a remarkable success (considering this success in terms of the number of editions), as I shall explore in later chapters of this thesis.

1.11 Women, Medicine, Midwifery: Developments in the Seventeenth Century

It is certainly true that the troubles of women at the household were immense; these included, especially, issues concerning the health of the members of the family. But looking beyond that space, and speaking in general terms, the practice of medicine was deeply linked to the church, and authorized by it: it was the religious authority of the bishop of Canterbury (both before and after the civil war) who issued the licenses for the authorized practice of medicine and surgery. Between 1580 and 1775, 850 licences were issued by the successive archbishops, and among them, only 7 out of that number were assigned to women (Wyman, 1984: 28). Specialized surgeons, however, were expensive and hard to find, and in most cases one had to rely on those who were available or at hand. That is the reason why, in 1542 (the starting year of the Civil War), an Act issued by the Parliament enabled "divers honest men and women" to continue with their activities as unlicensed doctors or surgeons, since most licensed doctors were only "minding their own lucres" (Wyman, 1984: 27). A few licensed women surgeons and a much more quantity of unlicensed ones, who had no formal studies, had to place themselves in charge of complex situations that required a firmer knowledge; this partly explains the popular success of medicine books and books of midwifery in that century, which circulated abundantly.

Books of medicine were developing and becoming closer to a modern understanding of the field, though they rarely were completely free of prejudice. The field was strongly dominated by male writers and doctors, who sometimes show remarkable clarity and lucidity, but who are quite willing to let their ideology manifest itself in their discourse. This sometimes became clear in treatises on childbirth and midwifery; as John Rumrich has put it, "While massive practical ignorance and nascent professional avarice made motherhood appallingly perilous, the development of new life in women's wombs was the focus of lively philosophical debate and theoretical disputation" (Rumrich, 1996: 102). There was a strong tension between an almost superstitious discourse and a more scientific one. The latter was unmeasurably helped by the publication and circulation in England of Giulio Casserius' illustrations of the female womb and the foetus. The original illustrations were drawn by the mannerist Italian painter,

Odoardo Fialetti (1573-1638), and they were added to the influential *De Formato Foetu* by Adriaan van de Spiegel (1578-1625), often called Spigelius; it was published posthumously in 1626. These illustrations, which were reprinted and adapted all though Europe, deeply influenced early modern mental conceptions of how a child was carried in her/his mother's womb, as has been explored by Heidi A. Heilemann. (Heilemann, 2011) The first to introduce Casserius' pictures in England was Thomas Chamberlayne in his book *The Compleat Midwifes Practice*, published in 1656. As many other books targeted to midwives and mothers, this one also explains how to deal with complicated cases and how to manipulate fetus that are abnormally positioned, as well as how to take care of the new-born infant (Heinemann, 2011: 25).

Before that key moment, manuals addressed to midwives and surgeons had already been gaining presence in England. A very popular one, though still addressed mostly to men, was Jacques Guillameau's *Child-Birth, or the Happy Deliverie of Woman* (1635), which openly gave a condescending, passive role to women: "As for women (who I am most afraid to offend) they must bee content to have their infirmities detected, if they will have help for them" (1635: Av). But the potential market for these books was rapidly changing, as can be seen in the work of Nicholas Culpeper, who published in 1651 *A Directory for Midwives*, which was a major influence on later women writers such as Jane Sharp, as has recently been defended by the historian Guy Sechrist[50]. Challenging the theory that Culpeper only (or mainly) wrote for men, Sechrist considers that, on the contrary, Culpeper was directly aiming for woman readers when he wrote his book, and his influence on Sharp is the essential proof of it. Society was rapidly evolving, and women became not only the readers, but also the writers of manuals on midwifery.

[50] Sechrist, Guy: "Nicholas Culpeper's Directory: Legitimatizing the Profession of Midwives in Seventeenth Century England".
https://www.academia.edu/29053486/Nicholas_Culpepers_Directory_Legitimatizing_the_Profession_of_Midwives_in_Seventeenth_Century_England. Accessed 26 October 2024.

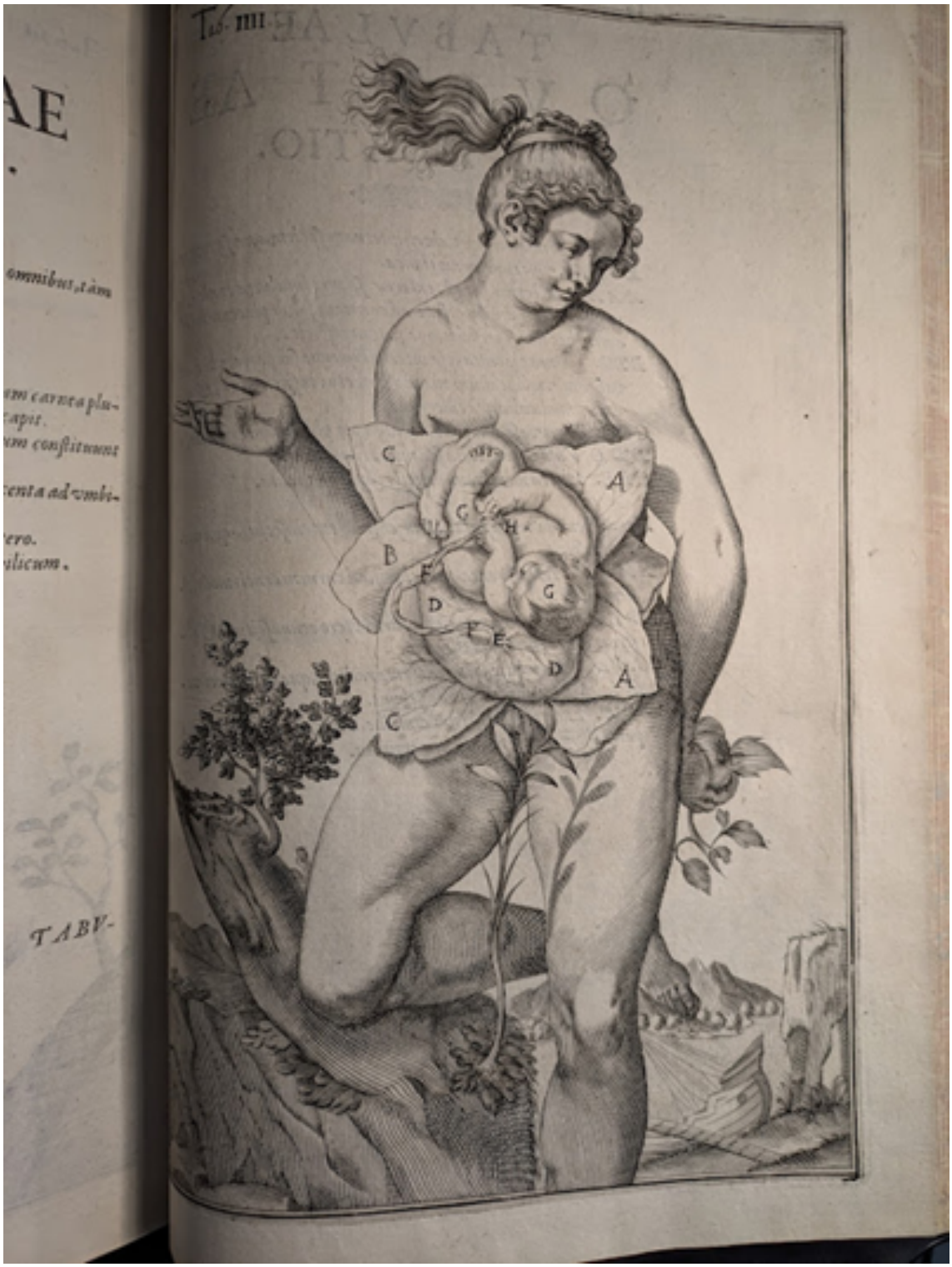
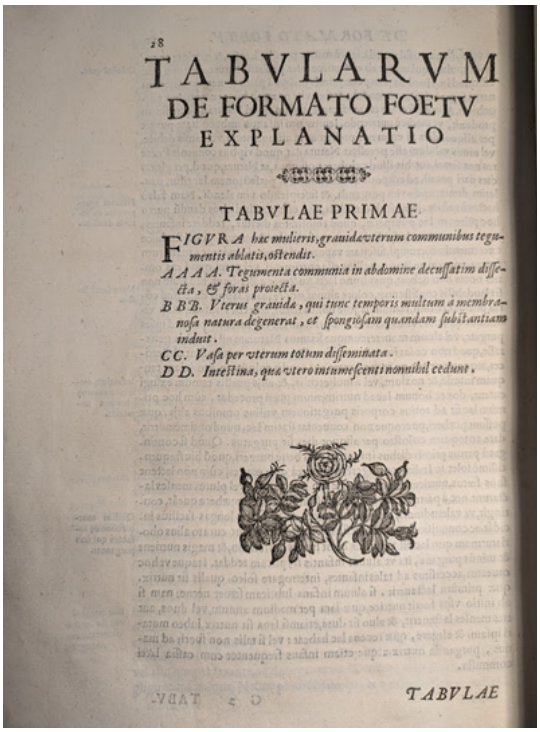


Figure 9. Spigelius, *De formato foetu*, 1626. Tabula IIII. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.


TABVLARVM
DE FORMATO FOETV
EXPLANATIO

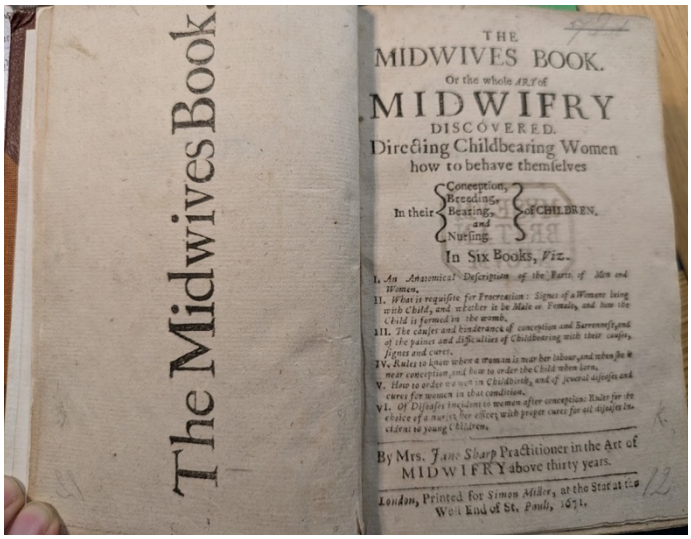
TABVLAE PRIMAE

FIGVRA hæc mulieris grauidæ uterum communibus tegumentis ablatis, ostendit.
AAAA. Tegumenta communia in abdomine decussatim dissecta, & foras protecta.
BBB. Vterus grauida, qui tunc temporis multum à membranosa natura degenerat, et spongiosam quandam subitantiam induit.
CC. Vasa per uterum totum disseminata.
DD. Intestina, quæ utero intumescenti nonnihil cedunt.

TABVLAE

Figure 10. Spigelius, *De Formato Foetu*. 1626. Tabula I. Explanation. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library

Figure 11. Spigelius, *De Formato Foetu*. 1626. Tabula I. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.


The Midwives Book.

THE
MIDWIVES BOOK.
Or the whole ART of
MIDWIFRY
DISCOVERED.
Directing Childbearing Women
how to behave themselves
In their { Conception, Breeding, Beating, and Nursing } of CHILDREN.
In Six Books, *Viz.*

I. *An Anatomical Description of the Parts of Men and Women.*
II. *What is requisite for Procreation: Signes of a Woman being with Child, and whether it be Male or Female, and how the Child is formed in the womb.*
III. *The causes and hinderance of conception and Barrenness, and of the paines and difficulties of Childbearing with their causes, signes and cures.*
IV. *Rules to know when a woman is near her labour, and when she is near conception, and how to order the Child when born.*
V. *How to order a woman in Childbirth, and of several diseases and cures for women in that condition.*
VI. *Of Diseases incident to women after conception: Rules for the choice of a nurse, her diet, with proper cures for all diseases incident to young Children.*

By Mrs. *Jane Sharp* Practitioner in the Art of MIDWIFRY above thirty years.

London, Printed for *Simon Miller*, at the Star at the West End of St. *Pauls*, 1671.

Figure 12. This is the first edition of Jane Sharp's *The Midwives Book*, published in 1671. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

Figure 13. Illustrative image in Jane Sharp's *Midwives Book*, influenced by Spigelius and the Casseri tables. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

One of the books that still show this uneasy balance between medical discourse and prejudice is William Sermon's *The English Midwife or the Ladies' Companion* (1671), one of the most commonly consulted towards the end of the century[51]. The volume is an amazing compilation of tips and pieces of advice concerning all the difficulties involved in childbirth. In chapter XXI, for instance, he refers to difficult deliveries. As any scientist would do, he first considers the possible reasons for the hardship in the delivery, the most common being "any distaste women in labour have to any others in the room with her, as oftentimes she doth" (Sermon, 1671: 111); in that case, that other person would have to leave the room, since it is usual that women "are ashamed to see themselves in such a condition". Cold air can also be a problem, because coldness "closeth up the body, especially the parts that ought to be enlarged"; on the other hand, if the air is too hot, it "causeth women to lose their strength": therefore, "the air must be temperate, rather hot than cold". If the women are too lean or too fat, or too small, the delivery can be complicated too, or if the woman is too young or too old (the author does not specify which age), the delivery will be hard. What could be done to overcome these problems? In chapter XXII Sermon considers a wide range of solutions. If the problem is that the woman is too fat, the midwife should put aside the flesh of the woman, without hurting her, so that the child can find his way out; he or she must "hold it still to one side, till the child come forth of the womb". Childbearing women that are too lean, or too small, or too young or too old (all of these) should be anointed with relaxing oils, so that their intimate parts can be adequately widened, and a special drink, made of two ounces of "distilled water of pellitory of the wall and oil of sweet almonds, one ounce" should be given to them as well. The author writes down as much as sixteen possible recipes for ailing women to drink at the moment of their delivery, in which all sorts of plants, oils, animals and roots are included. As a significant curiosity of this book we should note that the woman's vagina is always called euphemistically "the secret parts": even in books of medicine, the "lower parts" or the genitals were still looked upon with disgust and shame.

On another note, and with a clearer sense of medical ambition and usefulness, Jane Sharp was the first English female midwife to publish; she did it in 1671, although very little is known about her. On the first page of his book (*The Midwives book*), she claims to have been practicing midwifery for 30 years. Perhaps Sharp was looking for a licence to practice in a time when ecclesiastical

[51] Sermon, William; The English Midwife or The Ladies Companion. London, 1671. https://books.google.es/books?id=HKtkAAAAcAAJ&pg=PA111&hl=es&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=4#v=onepage&q&f=false. Accessed on 6th December 2022.

licensing was suspended, from 1642 to 1660, during the Civil War. The fact is that she does not appear on the nearly five-hundred London midwifery certificates surviving from 1661 to 1699, so perhaps she practiced somewhere outside the capital. We cannot assure if she was married or single, or if she had been a mother or not; it is true that the publisher gives her the title of "Mrs", but this may have been a courtesy title only. The truth is that Sharp's *The Midwives Book* is the first and only manual dedicated to midwivery and published by a woman in English before 1700. Her 1671 text of 418 pages was cited by many other authors into the early eighteenth century (Forman, 2016: x, xi y xii). Her vivid descriptions of female anatomy and sexual pleasure are surprising for her time, but we have to consider that the aim of the book was a successful reproduction, for which the pleasure of both members of the couple was (it was commonly thought) necessary.

As Lisa Corman Cody has put it, "Sharp's text is no less sophisticated than other contemporary texts, and if anything, shows that Sharp read widely, wrote well, and had certainly attended women in labour" (Forman, 2016: x, xi y xii). She had also read *The Secret Miracles of Nature*, published by Levinus Lemnius (1505-1568) in 1658[52], a curious book that considers all aspects of human nature from the viewpoint of reason and experience, giving ample room as well to the imaginative power of pregnant woman. Rooted on the classical works of Galen, Hippocrates and Aristotle, Lemnius weaves together facts and religion. He considers that the body and the soul are inseparably linked together, and that mothers can, through their imaginations only, give many different forms to the foetus. However, Jane Sharp did not completely agree with this theory, as she put it in her volume:

> (…) All this proceeds from the strength of imagination, so *Empedocles,* so *Paracelsus* determine it, and the last thought the Plague to be infectious only to those that fancie made it so. The *Arabians* ascribe so much power to imagination, that it can change the very works of nature, heal diseases, work wonders, command all kind of matter, and they impute as much or more to that, than Divines do to having Faith, to which nothing is impossible; but I cannot be altogether of their opinion (Sharp, 1671: 122).

[52] There were three editions of this book in the seventeenth century: the first one in 1658, the second in 1664 and the third one in 1667; the original was published in Latin in 1559.

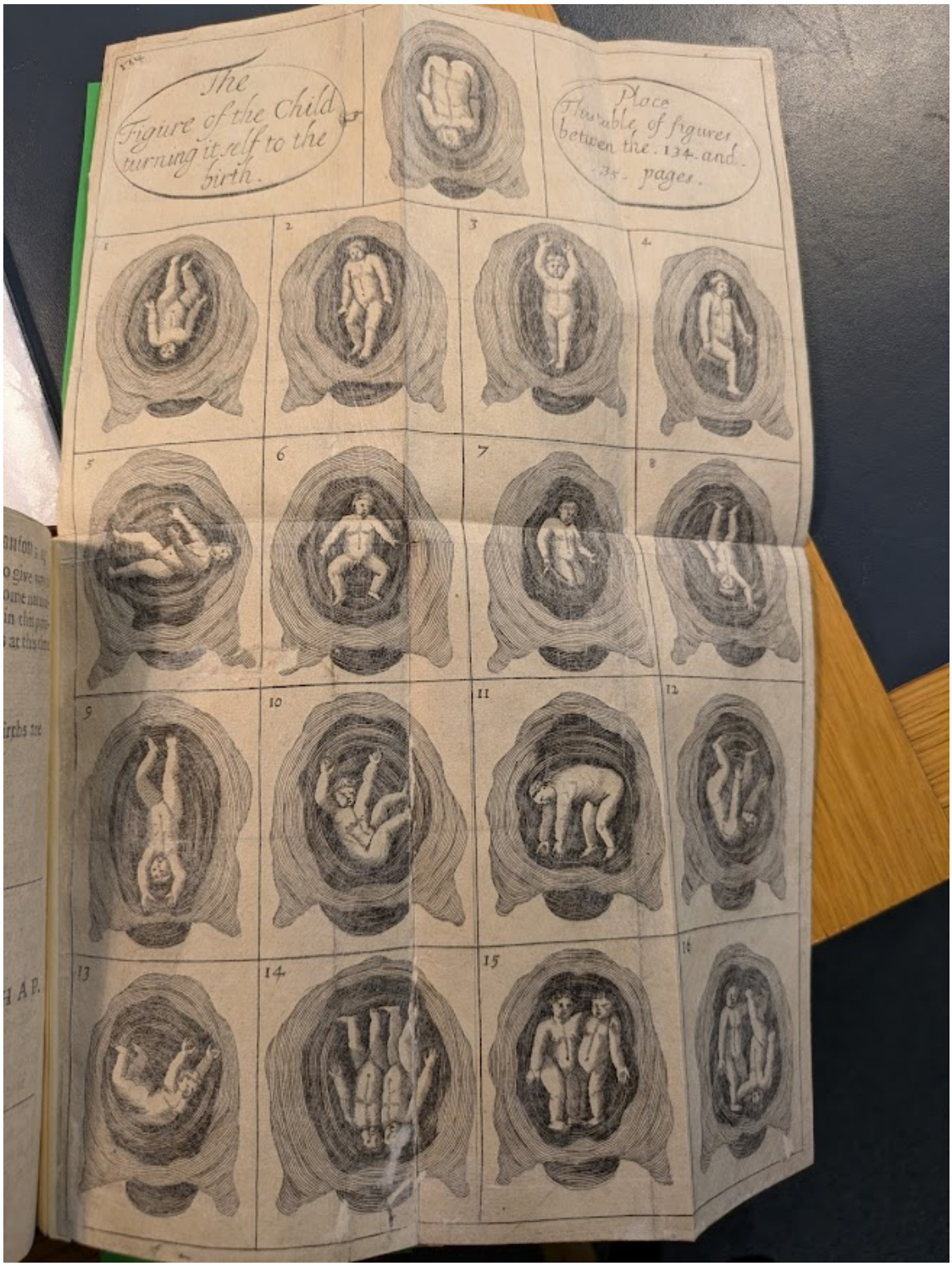


Figure 14. "The figure of the child turning itself to the birth". In Jane Sharp's *Midwives Book* (1671). The child always appeared completely formed in these plates. Fol. 134. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

Jane Sharp was too close to the actual practice of being a midwife to give too much credit to the imaginative power. In this, as in everything else, she was coming close to what would later become medical empiricism.

1.12 Motherly Duties: The Case of William Gouge

Men seemed to know better what was good for women, as we have seen. And yet, how did mothers have to behave in real, day-to-day circumstances? What were the main duties that they were expected to fufill? In William Gouge's abundantly famous book (*Of Domesticall Duties,* 1627), for example, we can find eight treatises: number III is called "Particular Duties of Wives." At the beginning, Gouge refers to a part of the Bible, in Ephesians 5.22:

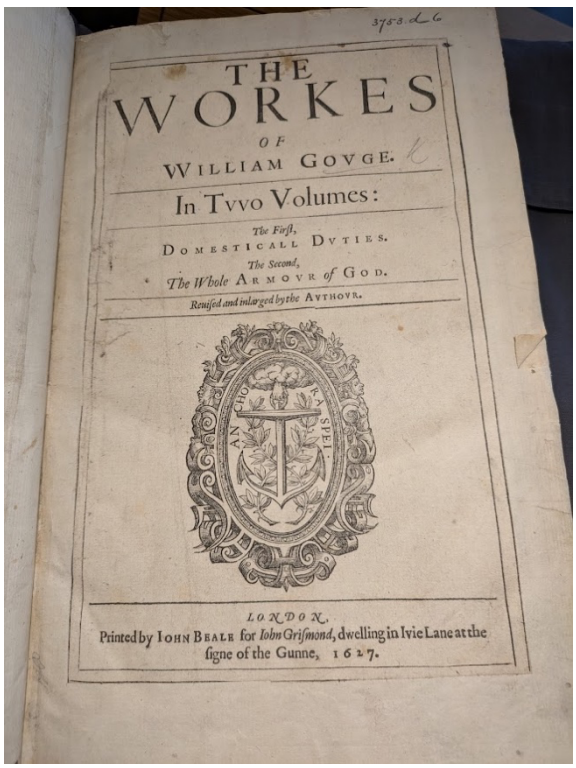
> Wives, submit yourselves unto your owne husbands, as unto the Lord. Vers. 23: For the Husband is the Head of the Wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the Saviour of the body. Vers. 24. Therefore, as the Church is subject to Christ, so let wives be subjected to their Husbands in euery thing (Gouge, 1627: 157).

The first required duty of the Christian wife, then, is subjection. And it cannot be just any type of subjection; Gouge compares it to the subjection owed to Christ: "That it be such a subiection as should be performed to Christ. The extent of wives subiection doth stretch it selfe very farre, euen to all things" (Gouge, 1627: 157). Subjection to all things and performed in such a way as if it was done to Christ: indeed, the duty was not small, but it had the support of the husband, who was meant to be "by virtue of his office, a protector of his wife." (Gouge, 1627: 157). Is there a reason for this subjection? It does not take too long for it to appear in the text: "Good reason it is that shee who first drew man into sinne, should be now subiect to him" (Gouge, 1627: 158). This subjection implies two things: "That she acknowledge her husband to be her superior and that shee respect him as her superior" (Gouge, 1627: 158). Women have no right to own possessions privately and should be guided by their husbands in every way. Humility, sincerity, cheerfulness and constancy are four virtues that should be present in every good woman (Gouge, 1627: 192).

And mothers, then? How should they behave? Gouge' sixth treatise is dedicated to the duties of the parents, with a special part concerning mothers exclusively. According to Gouge, all parents should do three things to children: to nourish them, to nurture them, and to instruct them "namely in the wayes of God" (Gouge, 1627: 281). And, how can parents do well? Because "the fountaine of parents

duties is love" (Gouge, 1627: 282). The mother, however, has a special responsibility of taking good care of herself while pregnant, so as not to have a miscarriage:

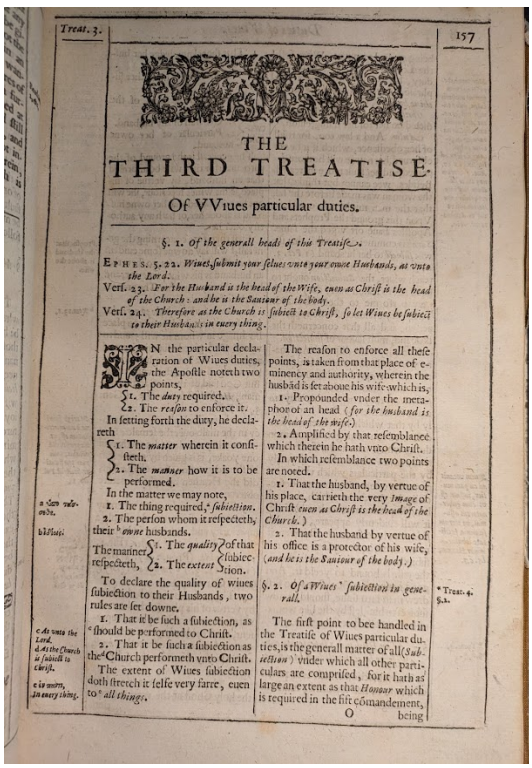
> They who through violence of passion, whether of griefe, or anger, or through violent motion of the body (…), by eating things hurtfull, by eating too much, by too much abstinence,(…) cause any abortion or miscarriage, fall into the offence contrary to the forenamed duty. (…) For if through their default, they, themselves or the child, miscarry, they make themselves guilty of that miscarriage (Gouge, 1627: 286).



THE
WORKES
OF
WILLIAM GOVGE.
In Tvvo Volumes:
The First,
DOMESTICALL DVTIES.
The Second,
The Whole ARMOVR of GOD.
Reuised and inlarged by the AVTHOVR.

LONDON,
Printed by IOHN BEALE for *Iohn Grismond*, dwelling in Ivie Lane at the signe of the Gunne, 1627.

Figure 15. William Gouge's *Works*, in its 1627 edition. Photograph taken with kind permission of the British Library.



Treat. 3. 157

THE
THIRD TREATISE.
Of VViues particular duties.

§. 1. *Of the generall heads of this Treatise.*

EPHES. 5. 22. *Wiues submit your selues vnto your owne Husbands, as vnto the Lord.*
Vers. 23. *For the Husband is the head of the Wife, euen as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the Sauiour of the body.*
Vers. 24. *Therefore as the Church is subiect to Christ, so let Wiues be subiect to their Husbands in euery thing.*

IN the particular declaration of Wiues duties, the Apostle noteth two points,
1. The *duty* required.
2. The *reason* to enforce it.
In setting forth the duty, he declareth
1. The *matter* wherein it consisteth.
2. The *manner* how it is to be performed.
In the matter we may note,
1. The thing required, *subiection.*
2. The person whom it respecteth, their *owne* husbands.
The manner respecteth, 1. The *quality* of that subiection. 2. The *extent*
To declare the quality of wiues subiection to their Husbands, two rules are set downe.
1. That it be such a subiection, as *should be performed to Christ.*
2. That it be such a subiection as the Church performeth vnto Christ.
The extent of Wiues subiection doth stretch it selfe very farre, euen to *all things.*

The reason to enforce all these points, is taken from that place of eminency and authority, wherein the husband is set aboue his wife: which is,
1. Propounded vnder the metaphor of an head (*for the husband is the head of the wife.*)
2. Amplified by that resemblance which therein he hath vnto Christ.
In which resemblance two points are noted.
1. That the husband, by vertue of his place, carrieth the very *Image* of Christ *euen as Christ is the head of the Church.*)
2. That the husband by vertue of his office is a protector of his wife, (*and he is the Sauiour of the body.*)

§. 2. *Of a Wiues subiection in generall.*

The first point to bee handled in the Treatise of Wiues particular duties, is the generall matter of all (*Subiection*) vnder which all other particulars are comprised, for it hath as large an extent as that *Honour* which is required in the fift cõmandement,

O being

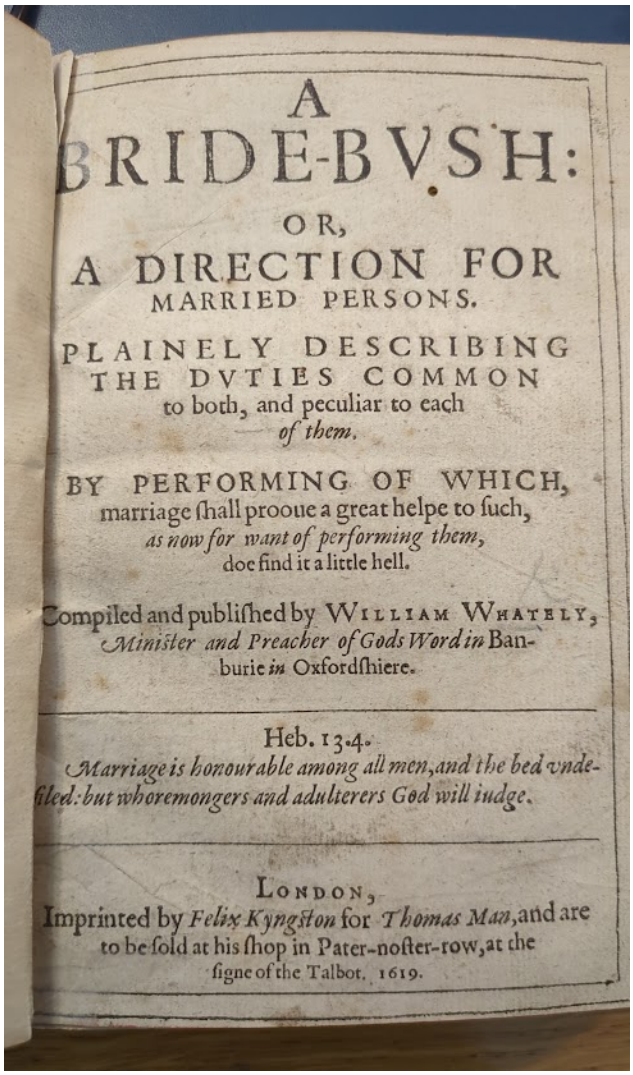
Figure 16. Subjection is the most important duty regarding wives, according to William Gouge, as can be seen in this section. Photograph taken with kind permission of the British Library.

A major difference in responsibility emerges here, assigning more important duties to the pregnant woman (probably ill-advised to start with) bring also a lack of proportion in accountability. The mother should take enormous care both of the child and f her well-being, because the miscarriage could probably be her fault.

Also, in Thomas Gouge's much later work *A Word to Sinners and a Word to Saints* (1674), there is a perfect summary of how to bear all the miseries in life, at

least for Puritans. These also clearly to be understood as "duties". In its chapter XVII, which is entitled "How to improve losses, crosses and afflictions" the writer gives some "directions" so that the readers know "how to carry yourselves" in such situations. The first piece of advice is to bear "the losses and crosses" sensibly.

> The Lord expects we should be sensible of the weight of our afflictions and compare us not with stocks, that bear the stripes so easily. On the other hand, we do not have to despise them as if we did not care a bit, nor faint under the losses as if they were unsupportable, not to be endured(…). The only way to bear our afflictions in a Christian like way is with patience and silence (Gouge, 1674: 63).



A
BRIDE-BVSH:
OR,
A DIRECTION FOR
MARRIED PERSONS.
PLAINELY DESCRIBING
THE DVTIES COMMON
to both, and peculiar to each
of them.
BY PERFORMING OF WHICH,
marriage ſhall prooue a great helpe to ſuch,
as now for want of performing them,
doe find it a little hell.
Compiled and publiſhed by WILLIAM WHATELY,
Minister and Preacher of Gods Word in Banburie *in* Oxfordſhiere.
Heb. 13.4.
Marriage is honourable among all men, and the bed vndefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will iudge.
LONDON,
Imprinted by *Felix Kyngſton* for *Thomas Man*, and are to be ſold at his ſhop in Pater-noſter-row, at the ſigne of the Talbot. 1619.

Figure 17. Gouge was one among many authors who set behavioral patterns. This book was written by William Whately (1619), and the author also considered that the sparse use of the rod by men (with wives) was advisable. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

This attitude is very strictly opposed by the author to "inward repining" or to any "outward complaining" (Gouge, 1674: 63). This is basically what women were forced to do when a child passed away: Too little sadness was not proper, nor too much was becoming.

We have presented Gouge's opinions at some length here because of their indisputability, but because they are culturally very relevant. Gouge was a major clergyman and a respected theologian, as well as a clerk in the Church of England. His perspectives are very important to us in that they show two important aspects. First, the tendency that was, to a large extent imposed on women of not showing their sadness too clearly, especially at the loss of child; this theme will appear later in this thesis, and we will see to what extent this injunction was (or was not) heeded. Secondly, because of the unequal weight of responsibility that he lays upon the mother before the marriage: even before birth, women already were assigned a major duty in relation to the children; should anything go wrong in these aspects, the fault would be clearly theirs.

1.13 Breastfeeding

Even though some of the earlier humanists, such as Juan Luis Vives (in his *Instruction to the Christian woman*, published for the first time in 1523) had advised against the use of wetnurses in a family, it was something common and widespread, especially among the highest ranks of society. In England as well as in France or Spain, the practice was quite established, and moral advice or Christian guidance was quite contrary to the customary habit. Quite often this was defended on pre-scientific grounds, or seen as a venerable tradition which had its origin in classical times. The humoral theory, introduced in medicine by Hippocrates and Galen, was based on the idea that health was sustained by the balance of the four different humours that inhabited the human body. These four humours were blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile (Arikha, 2007). Then, what was the milk that came out of a mother's breast? It was a "distillation of her blood that carried her characteristics of mind and body" (Crawford, 2005: 149), participating of the combination of the four humours, and containing her own personal essence.

This was a general and common idea, developed by writers like Charles Guillemeau in 1607[53] (who also followed Galen and Hippocrates) or Thomas

[53] His book was quickly translated into English (1634), with great success; it had been published in French for the first time in 1609. There is also a translation into English online, from 1634: https://tinyurl.com/ykt8a3oz. Accessed on 4th November 2024.

Muffet in 1655[54], or Henry Newcome much later, in 1695[55]. Since the humoral essence of the mother was transferred to the child through sucking, it was of the utmost importance that she would breastfeed her child. The above-mentioned Jane Sharp was convinced that the reason why poor children survived more than richer children was that they were nurtured by their mothers, instead of being breastfed by wetnurses. Furthermore, Jane Sharp went so far as to accuse of lack of love to those mothers who refuse to nurture naturally to their breed:

> The usual way for rich people is to put forth their children to nurse, but that is a remedy that needs a remedy, if it might be had; because it changeth the natural disposition of the child, and oftentimes exposeth the infant to many hazards, if great care be not taken in the choice of the nurse. There are not many Women that want milk to suckle their own children; so there are some that may well be excused, because of their weakness, that they cannot give suck to them: but multitudes pretend weakness when they have no cause for it, because they have not so much love for their own, as dumb creatures have (Sharp, 1671: 353).

In the final decades of the century, a book entitled *The Compleat Mother*, by Henry Newcome (1695) became quite popular with its treatment of this particular matter. What it had to say on the practice of breastfeeding was significant: "Children of our nobility and gentry…in their infancy generally are more unhappy than the sons of country peasants. The poor tenant's child is for the most part nursed in its own mother's bosom, and cherished by her breasts, whilst the landlord's heir is turned out, exiled from his mother's embraces as soon as from her womb, and assigned to the care of some stranger" (Newcome,1695: 6; Urban, 2006: 17). We can partly sense here a sense of validation of a natural process that would be at the basis of Augustan literature and thought. The whole of Newcome's book is meant to be a treatise to dissuade mothers from giving their children to wetnurses, to be breastfed by them. The author gives numerous reasons for not doing so, but the most interesting is shown in his point number four (chapter two), where he reckons that the bonds between mother and child are stronger when the baby has been breastfed by his/her own mother. Conversely, when the baby has

[54] Mentioned as one of the first theorists of affection between mother and child by Crawford, 2005: 149.

[55] Henry Newcome published *The Compleat Mother* in 1695. There is an online version of this work; https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A53076.0001.001?view=toc. Accessed on 4th November 2024.

suckled from a wetnurse, there may well be more affection between the nurse and him/her than between the mother and the child.

It was still true that, in the last decades of the century, some men still desired to hire wetnurses, sometimes against their wives' desires, because they did not want to withdraw from sexual intercourse during the nursing period: the medical opinion generally recommended that a lactating woman should not have sex, because it would make her milk unwholesome (Eales, 1998: 69). But Donna J. Long (Long, 2007: 185) has acknowledged the existence of some contradictions among these medical books. On the one hand, mothers who refused to breastfeed their babies could be seen as acting against nature, but on the other hand they could remain as objects of desire of their own husbands, who could force –in economic terms, at least- the presence of a wetnurse. At the most basic of levels, then, that of breastfeeding their babies, mothers could find themselves unable to choose and seeing how their decisions were taken by others, while they were caught at the point of convergence of completely contradictory discourses.

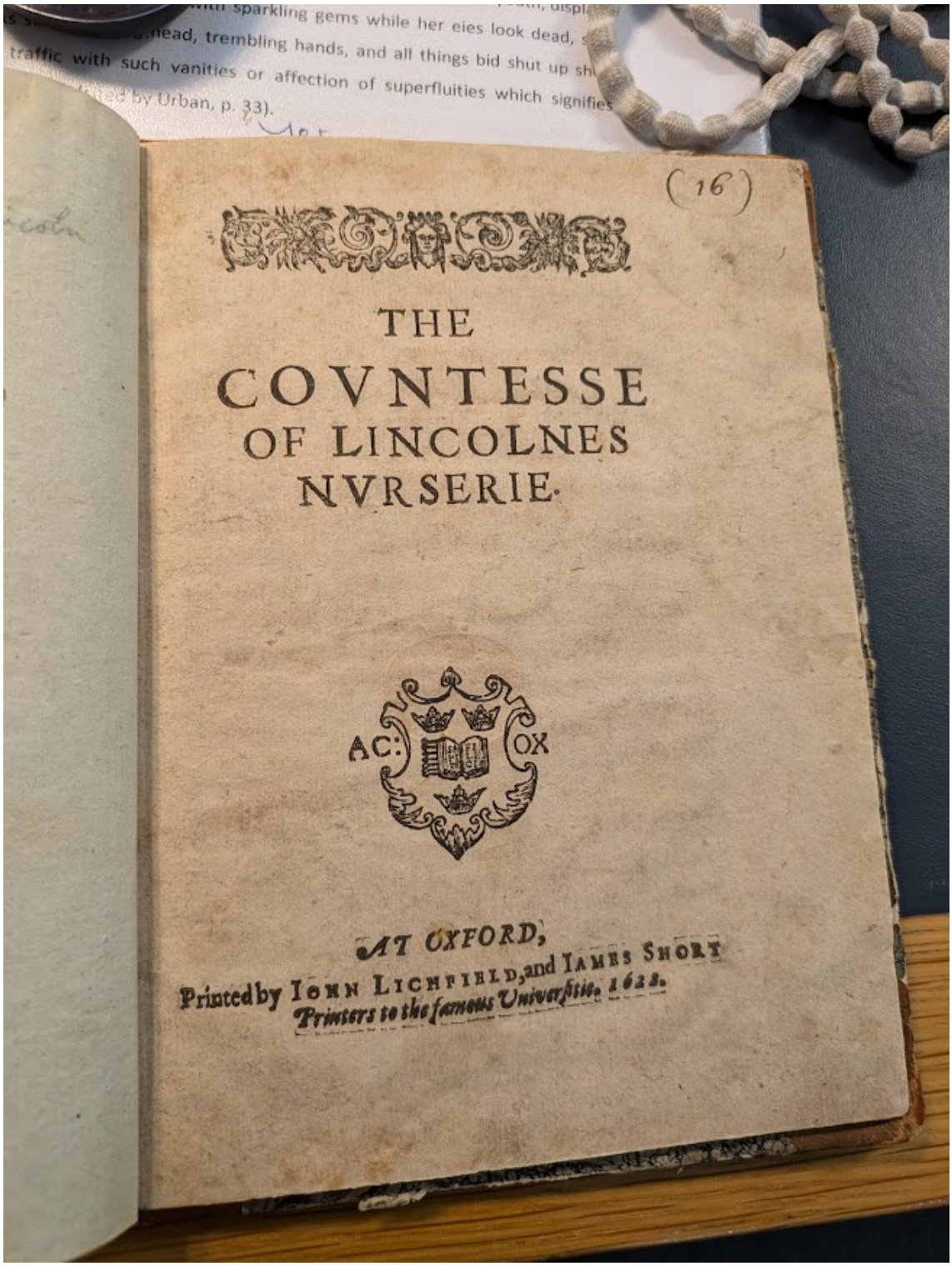
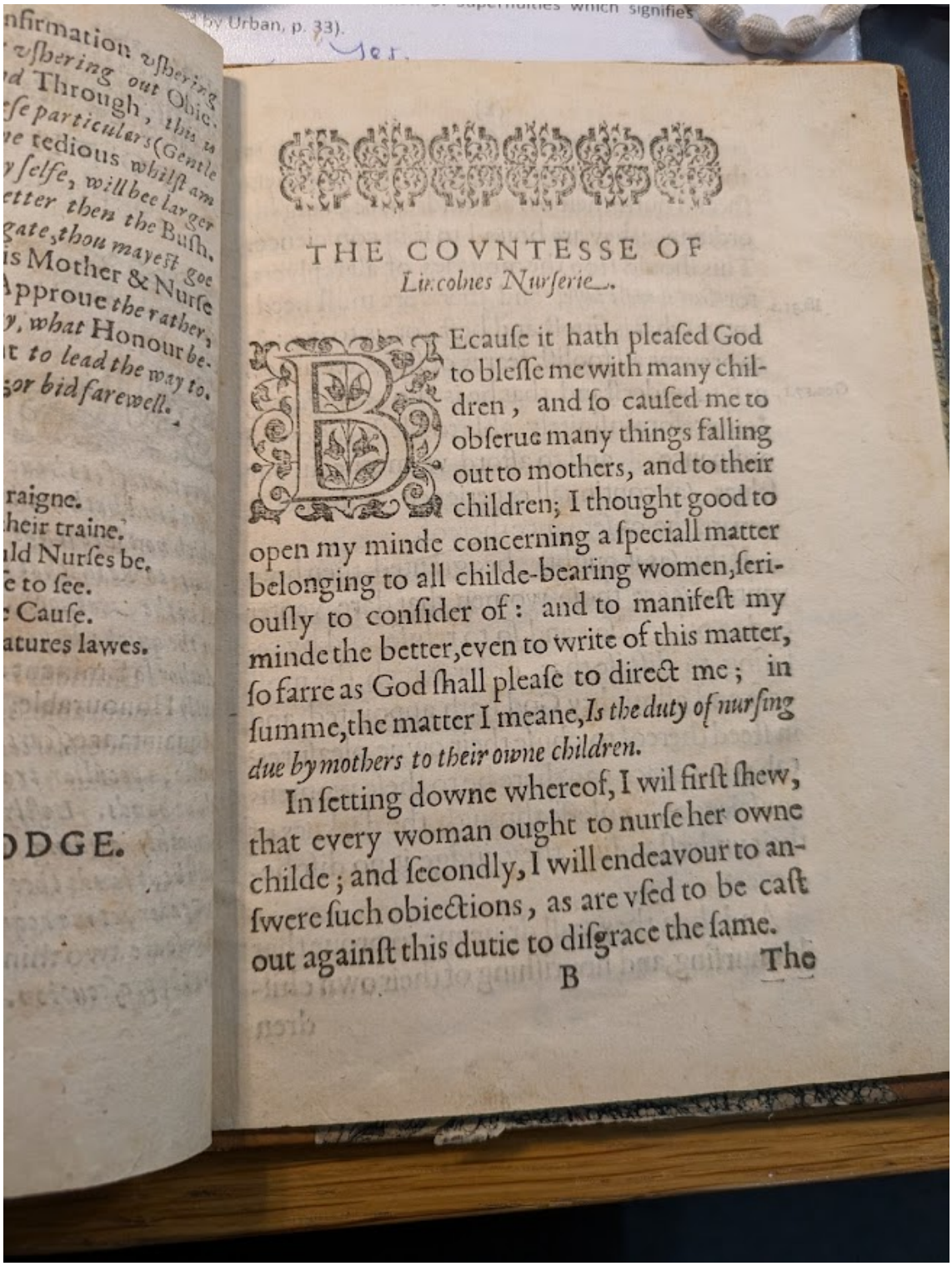


Figure 18. *The countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie*, by Elizabeth Lincoln, in its 1623 edition. This was a defense of maternal breastfeeding. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.



THE COVNTESSE OF
Lincolnes Nurſerie.

BEcauſe it hath pleaſed God to bleſſe me with many children, and ſo cauſed me to obſerue many things falling out to mothers, and to their children; I thought good to open my minde concerning a ſpeciall matter belonging to all childe-bearing women, ſeriouſly to conſider of: and to manifeſt my minde the better, even to write of this matter, ſo farre as God ſhall pleaſe to direct me; in ſumme, the matter I meane, *Is the duty of nurſing due by mothers to their owne children.*

In ſetting downe whereof, I wil firſt ſhew, that every woman ought to nurſe her owne childe; and ſecondly, I will endeavour to anſwere ſuch obiections, as are vſed to be caſt out againſt this dutie to diſgrace the ſame.

Figure 19. In the preface, the aim of the book is clear: "The matter I meane, *Is the duty of nursing due by mothers to their owne children*". Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

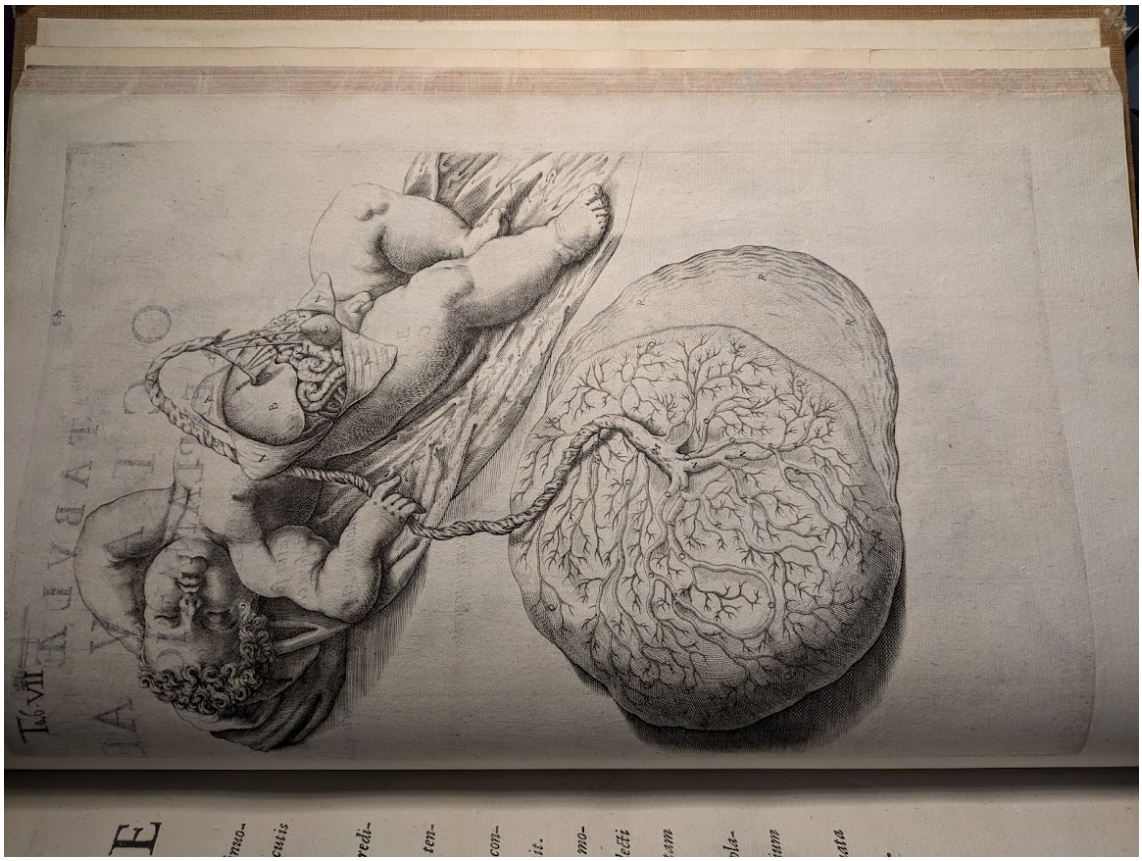


Figure 20. Spigelius, *De Formato Foetu*, 1626. Tabula VII. Here we can see the depiction of a child and the placenta. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

1.14 Conclusion

In this chapter we have traced the dominant discourses about mothers in the English seventeenth century. We have examined the areas in which the role of these women was defined from the outside, without taking into account perspectives that only they could offer (as in the case of medical discourses), but we have also found spaces that allowed for some agency on their part (for instance, in the area of midwifery, which allowed for the extraordinary case of Jane Sharp).

We have also been able to trace how the logic of abstract doctrine and theology could condition the daily reality of women, and especially of mothers. An enormous flood of documents on morality and everyday life had been produced since the beginning of the Reformation, and this conditioned every aspect of the representation and performance of motherhood. But, as we have seen, if Protestantism was a major source of control over mothers, it also allowed them new spaces of self-expression.

These spaces came directly as a result of the greater Protestant insistence on self-examination and its renewed attention to the life of the self. Mothers therefore

could express themselves in private diaries, in passionate prayers and especially in Books of Advice, some of which were eventually printed and became a significant and powerful literary fashion in the century. All of these documents are relevant to our perspective, and all of them are interesting as expressions of what being a mother was in the seventeenth century.

We have now come to a point from which we can begin to consider and read in detail the writing by some of these mothers. Having seen the complexity of the circumstances under which they had to operate, it will be possible for us to understand better the deeper connotations present in their texts. At the beginning we indicated that there are three particular women whose place in the bibliography and critical consideration are (in spite of some critical articles and studies dedicated to them) still insufficient: Elizabeth Grymeston, Elizabeth Joscelin and Elizabeth Walker. It is to them, therefore, that we must now turn.

Chapter 2

Elizabeth Grymeston: a Catholic in a Protestant world

2.1 Introduction and Justification

Elizabeth Grymeston is a fundamental piece of this thesis. First of all, she was a Catholic mother living and writing in a protestant environment, and as such she offers a privileged chance of understanding the spirit of someone who intimately did not accept the political and religious climate of her own country; someone who, however, was inevitably influenced by the general mentality of the society surrounding her. This chapter will focus on the spiritual legacy that she wanted to leave to her son, Bernye. The image of a woman's subjectivity, a woman who reads and selects her readings, a woman who is concerned (especially concerned, as we will see) about death and the salvation of the soul, a woman who dares to publish, a woman who is a Catholic in a world of protestants, is well worth studying, as in itself it provides a unique image of motherhood in a complex social and religious environment.

Grymeston also offers the first example of a sub-genre of books that appeared in the seventeenth century and was quite successful then: the mother's books of advice (discussed briefly in our first chapter). These books, as we have seen, were considered as handbooks for life, legacies which their descendants could consult when they were beset by the difficulties of life, or simply when they wanted to hear their mother's voice again. They were created purposefully for the descendants, but at the same time they were published and offered to a wide reading audience, so that in fact they inhabit a blurred space between the public and private spheres (Anselment, 2004: 431-453)[56]. The women who wrote their legacies in this way were the depositaries of authority for two reasons: they were perceived as potentially exemplary mothers, and they were often seen as having written when

[56] Anselment shows that, as Paston and Harley's letter were not intended to be published, there was no need for justification, in clear contrast with the books of advice. However, thanks to the work of James Daybell (2001), among others, we know that some letters had a public character, since they were frequently copied and circulated among family or friends.

they were close to the end of their lives[57]. These two elements conferred an aura of authority that they would not have obtained otherwise, and they certainly made good use of it as writers; as we shall see in this chapter, Grymeston certainly did.

We must not forget, however, that while we are facing the text of an individual woman, we are also looking at a miscellany: that is, a text made up of heterogeneous materials, and which combines multiple sources in order to give a general perspective on life. Grymeston had a tendency to use the writings of English poets (most of them Catholic, but also some notable Protestants) to illustrate her own vision of the world; she also incorporated multiple classical materials, that she probably took from humanistic compilations, and of course she made an abundant use of the Bible. If it was not an anachronism, her book could be seen in the terms of what we call an intertext, constantly referring to others and interacting with them –though in no case, of course, could it have the conceptual amplitude that we associate with the hypertext[58]-; this was a common characteristic of texts of humanistic descent, where quotation of multiple sources from the classical past were only to be expected. This certainly opens a question that must be seen as relevant in the context of this thesis: the extent to which this wealth of materials comes to drown or obfuscate her own voice. This aspect, however, is very complex, and we shall return to it in what follows. Can the voice of Grymeston be clearly heard among the multitude of voices that she evokes in the *Miscellanea*? Hughey and Herford, in their classical article on Grymeston, discussed this aspect explicitly: "It is not possible to say how much of the prose is her own, or how much borrowed directly or indirectly; but the general style of the prose throughout is the same, even in passages of especial eloquence, so- that it is hardly too much to say that she made the borrowings very much her own" (Hughey and Hereford, 1934: p. 84)[59]. More recent critics, as we shall see, have agreed with them on this.

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[57] Philippe Ariés (1981) has detailed very well the suggestive presence that dying patients had until the very end of their lives during this time.

[58] "Since *hyper*-generally means "above, beyond", hypertext is something that's gone beyond the limitations of ordinary text. Thus, unlike the text in a book, hypertext permits you, by clicking with a mouse, to immediately access text in one of millions of different electronic sources." Merrian-Webester dictionary. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/hypertext. Accessed on June 9th 2024].

[59] "There is not a single verse given in her book which is not derived. Except for the stanzas drawn from Southwell and from Verstegan's metrical version of the penitential psalms, all her verse passages are drawn from *Englands Parnassus*, which appeared in 1600. The only acknowledgement she makes for any of this verse is that to Peters Complaint in the heading to Chapter XL She was not a poetess, but she was skilful in adapting a quotation to her context. There is hardly a single stanza which appears exactly as it was printed in *Englands Parnassus*, and almost all of the stanzas taken from Peters Complaint are subtly altered so as to conform to the several prose prayers which precede them. The odes from Verstegan are not changed; Elizabeth may have received the book when she was too ill to work" (Hughey and Hereford, p.84).

Grymeston, in any case, opened a new path, since her *Miscellanea* was widely seen as the first book of advice in England written by a mother in England. We shall explore it in order to see how her subjective values are projected onto the text, and (perhaps more importantly) how in it she attempts to modulate the values and the subjectivity of her son, little Bernie.

2.2 Elizabeth Grymeston: Life, Work and Later Influence

Elizabeth Grymeston's life is briefly explained by herself at the beginning of her book, but there are some additional and relevant findings on it that were done by Ruth Hughey and Philip Hereford in their article "Elizabeth Grymeston and her *Miscellanea*", (Hughey and Hereford, 1934) and Betty Travistky has also included the essential information about her in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Travitsky, 2004: 256).[60] Let us summarise briefly the facts of her life that we need to consider in order to discuss the *Miscellanea*.

Elizabeth Grymeston (1563-1604) was the daughter of Martin Bernye and his wife Margaret Flint from Gunton, in North Erpingham, Norfolk. She must have been born before 1563, since in the record of a visitation of Norfolk for that year she is mentioned as a fifth child in the family. We know that by 1584 she was married to Christopher Grymeston, eighth and youngest son of Thomas Grymeston and his wife, Dorothy Thwaytes, of Smeeton in Yorkshire (Hughey and Hereford, 1934: 71). Child mortality was common at the time, but it was frighteningly present in her married life; Grymeston herself specifies in the *Epistle* preceding her book that as much as eight of her nine children died in infancy. Her health had been inevitably affected by these continued pregnancies; feeling unwell and fearing death, she felt the necessity of writing some advice to the only child that was left, so that he could have it as a legacy for life. By this time Grymeston was severely ill, and she was well aware of it:

> (…) [I] must yeelde to this languishing consumption to which it hath brought me: I resolved to breake the barren soile of my fruitlesse braine, to dictate something for thy direction: the rather for that as I am now a dead woman among the living" (Grymeston, 1606: A3).

On the 28th of January, 1605, Grymeston's *Miscellanea* entered the Stationer's Register; it had been printed in 1604, right after the death of the author. Most

[60] Although it is necessary the subscription, I offer the link of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*: https://tinyurl.com/ysbg6qvq. Accessed on 1st May 2023.

scholars, such as Betty Travistky, attribute the idea of first printing the book to Grymeston's husband (Travistky, 2004)[61]. There were as much as four different editions of the *Miscellanea* in the first two decades of the seventeenth century, and Hughey and Hereford list the names of the various printers and publishers involved: "The first was printed by Bradwood for Felix Norton in 1604; the second printed by Elde[62], not by Bradwood, for Aspley in 1605 or 1606; the third printed by Bradwood for Aspley probably before 1609[63]; the fourth was copied by Griffin from the third edition about 1618" (Hughey and Hereford, 1934: 61-89). Interestingly, there are some differences between the first edition and the others, since the text was expanded in six chapters (that is, from fourteen chapters to twenty) from the second edition onwards (Matchinske, 2009: 447); Grymeston's husband was doubtless responsible for this expansion of the text, to which he contributed many of the written materials that had been left by Elizabeth at the moment of her death. The fact that the book was reprinted four times is a proof of the fact that the book was quite popular in its own time, as Elaine V. Beilin reckons (Beilin, 1987: 268).

In her posthumous book, Grymeston oriented and advised her son about the many difficulties and troubles in life. This advice covered a multitude of aspects, going from the smallest details (like the pious rites that should be performed every day to be at peace with God) right unto the most important questions, such as the adequate preparations for death or the many ways of living a virtuous life. According to the English regulations of the moment[64], Grymeston's tract could easily have been censored because of its ambiguous religious content, but it managed to escape censorship precisely because its format was that of a book of motherly advice. As such, its form protected it and gave it an initial appearance of

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[61] I am referring here to the online and updated version of the Dictionary, cited before (see previous note).

[62] This edition is online; https://tinyurl.com/yov97kot. Accessed 3rd August 2023.

[63] This edition is also online: https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A02277.0001.001?view=toc Accessed on 10th February 2024.

[64] Queen Elizabeth published her *Injuctions* in 1559, targeting especially lay people and clergies. English regulations were clear: they refused to allow the printing of texts that openly defied the church of England. The *Star Chamber Decree* of 1586 was more specific and was addressed to the printers. It consisted of a detailed program to license printers and to regulate the book trade by limiting the number of presses and by monitoring their production. The pretension of making popery disappear went even further in 1606, when (under James I) the Parliament issued a statute directly aimed at dissenting Catholics and against popery. The books and the actions that were unlawful were clear: "No person or persons shall bring from beyond the seas, nor shall print, sell, or buy any Popish primers, Lady's psalters, manuals, rosaries, Popish catechisms, missals, breviaries, portals, legends and lives of saints, containing superstitious matters, printed or written in any language whatsoever, nor any other superstitious books printed or written in the English tongue" (3 Jac. I, cap. 5, quoted in Matchinske, 2007:331).

harmlessness, while in fact it actually made all kinds of commentaries on public and political matters. "*Miscellanea* does offer compelling evidence that a tract using the intimate format of maternal advice could direct public opinion in issues of national allegiance, religious conduct, and public policy making" (Matchinske, 2002: 332). The frontiers between the public and private spheres were not firmly established at the moment, and this book coming from the family of the Grymestones clearly took advantage of this ambiguity, as it made its way into the printed sphere and into English society. At the very start of the book, she clarified its purposes and intention in a very clear and unambiguous way:

> My dearest sonne, there is nothing so strong as the force of love; there is no love so forcible as the love of an affectionate mother to her natural child; there is no mother can eyther more affectionately shew her nature, or more naturally manifest her affection, than in advising her children out of her own experience, to eschew evil, and encline them to doe that which is good (Grymeston, 1606: A2r).

We thus find in Grymeston, as we do in other female authors of the period, an overt explanation and justification of her writing. Christine Sizemore points out how often this justification was present in women's advice books: "Advice books by women were sufficiently uncommon in the Renaissance that each woman is careful to justify her writings and even apologize for having stepped out of the traditional women's role" (Sizemore, 1976: 41). But in this case, there was more at stake than this. If it is true that Grymeston arranged the materials in the months previous to her death, then it was clear to her that Bernye, her son, could very soon be deprived of a mother, so that she felt the need of giving him advice, something endurable that can help him on future occasions, when she would not be there to guide him anymore. Elaine V. Beilin agrees on the importance that this goal may have had for Grymeston herself (Beillin, 1987: 267); in any case, it became soon one of the dominant topics in the many books of motherly legacies that were published in the wake of hers. There is very little that can be said objectively about her son, but we know that he must have responded to his mother's literary effort, since he went so far as to inserting a little poetic composition (a madrigal) in it. This madrigal is the only content of chapter XII of the *Miscellanea*, and it is quite short and moving, considering it is the only literary material left by her son, the addressee of the book:

A Madrigal made by Berny Grymeston upon the conceit of his mothers play to the former ditties.[65]
How many pipes, as many sounds
Do still impart to your sonnes hart,
As many deadly wounds,
How many strokes, as many stounds,
Ech stroke a dart, ech stound a smart,
Poor captive me confounds.
And yet how oft(en) the strokes of sounding keies hath staine,
As of the looks of your kind eies restore my life againe (Grymeston, 1606: D5r).

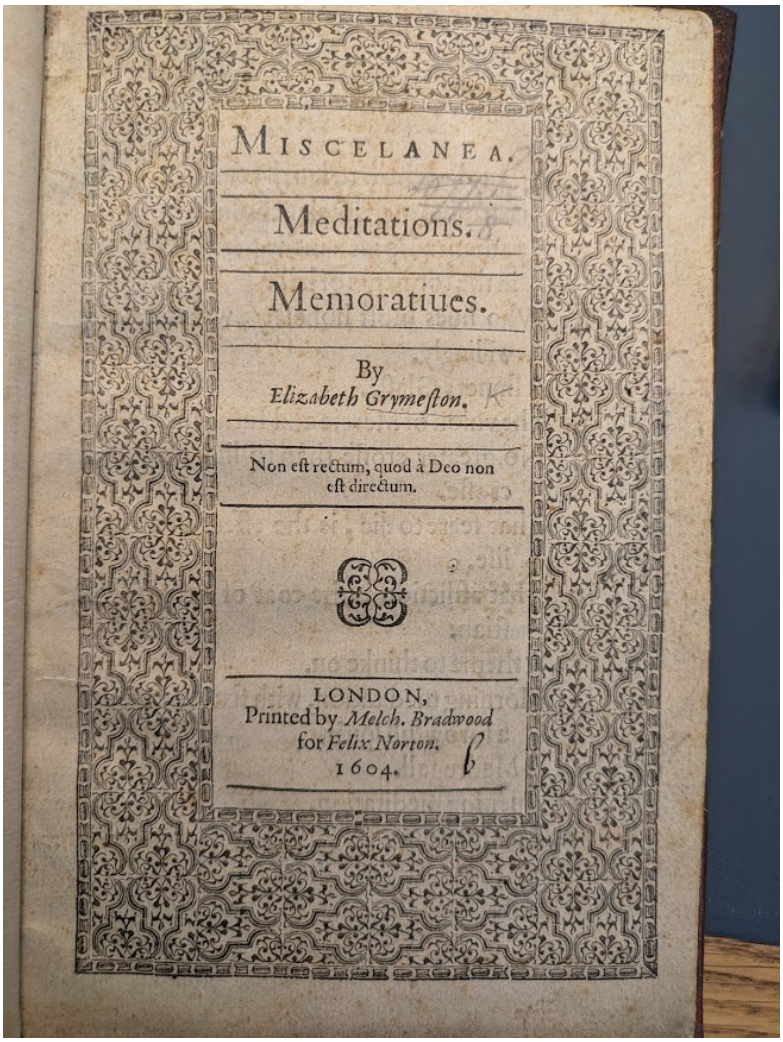
MISCELANEA.
Meditations.
Memoratiues.
By
Elizabeth Grymeſton.
Non eſt rectum, quod à Deo non eſt directum.
LONDON,
Printed by Melch. Bradwood
for Felix Norton.
1604.

Figure 21. The front page of Miscellanea (1604), in its first edition. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

[65] Ditties were short and simple songs; the idea is that of accompanying his mother as she was, presumably, at the organ.

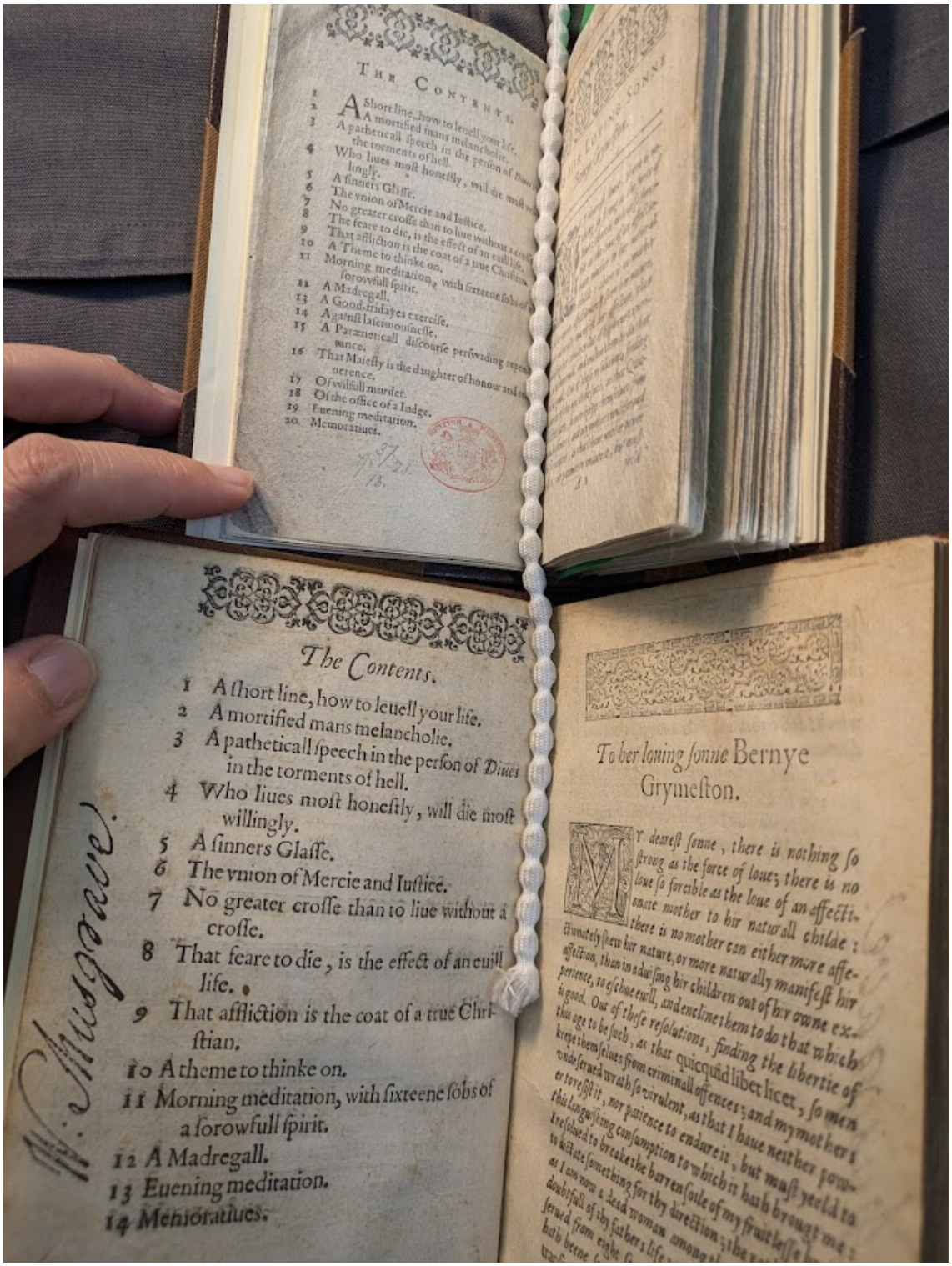

Figure 22. We can see the second and first edition, with the additional sections (six) in the second. 1606 and 1604 respectively. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

The last line is an example of filial love ("The looks of your kind eyes restore my life again"). In any case, it is clear that this must have been written during Grymestone's life, as it apparently captures a moment in which she was playing the organ ("how many pipes", "the strokes of sounding keyes" …) in Bernye's company. Not every family had access to an organ, and even lesser families learned to play "ditties", or simple popular melodies, in them; this in itself can give us an idea of the solid economic position of the family. This situation could not protect them, however, from sickness, suffering or death, and the book itself is a lasting testimony to that fact.

There were many other women who decided to publish their own legacies, following the example of Grymeston's book. At least three separate mothers' legacies followed within the next several years: Dorothy Leigh's *The Mothers Blessing* (1616), M. R.'s *The Mothers Counsell,* or *Live within Compass* (1623) and Elizabeth Joscelin's *The Mother's Legacie* (1624). However, as Felicity Dunworth indicates (Dunworth, 2010: 202), not all similar books achieved this kind of popularity: for instance, Elizabeth Clinton' Lincoln *Nurseries*, published in 1622, was only printed once. But since Grymeston's own advice book was reprinted frequently until 1606 and 1630, we can safely conclude infer that *Miscellanea*, with its combination of meditations and prayers together with ancient and contemporary wisdom, was quite popular.

2.3 Influences: Religious Poetry, Humanism and Beyond

Grymeston admits that she has taken ideas and words from others at the very beginning of the book: "Neither could I ever brooke to set downe that haltingly in my broken stile, which I found better expressed by a graver author" (Grymeston, *Epistle*, A4). Regarding her received influences, we need to refer to the excellent work by Eliane Beilin, *Redeeming Eve: Women Writers of the Renaissance* (1987), where there is a discussion of the various kinds of poetry that had an echo in Grymeston's book. According to Beilin, Grymeston's book is a "mixture of paraphrase, straight and altered quotations of authors from Ambrose to Spenser, from ancient religious literature to lines borrowed from Robert Abbott's *Englands Parnassus*[66]" (Beilin, 1987: 268), which was itself an anthology of English poetry, structured thematically and in parts ("soul", "death", "pleasure", etc…) as if it was a commonplace-book. According to Matchinske (p. 9), references to several

[66]Thankfully, this source is available online. Robert Abbott: 1600 https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A16884.0001.001?view=toc. Accessed on 10th January 2024.

other contemporary writers can also be found in Grymeston's work, such as Richard Verstegan[67] and Robert Southwell[68], who were both – not coincidentally- Catholic poets; we could also add that Edmund Spenser stands out among her selected Protestant authors. The interpretation that Elaine Beilin offers of this authorial attitude is very suggestive; she claims that this gathering of quotations and knowledge by others follows precisely the tradition of the Renaissance, and at the same time it involves a clear search "for an appropriately feminine persona, subject, and form" (Beilin, 1987: 269). There is no contradiction in the pursuit of one's perspective on the one hand, and the recollection of other's thoughts and ideas on the other, because that choice of materials there also says very much about the author, and that choice determines the lessons for life that will be extracted from them. Hughey and Hereford also pointed out that, even though it is not possible to establish clearly what passages are entirely hers and which are not, Grymeston nevertheless manages to combine them in such a way as to make them all her own (Hughey and Hereford, 1934: 84). The text thus displays a female appropriation (which appears to be quite natural, not forced at all) of a male-dominated world of poetry and knowledge in order to achieve a goal that was, in itself, quite feminine: to provide advice for a child.

Grymeston's identity is entirely configured by her choice of authors and excerpts. Originality as a concept was still irrelevant in the English Renaissance: it was especially the choice of authors and preferences that determined a writer's mentality and his or her creative personality. Beyond her individual case, her many readings can give us an idea of what other literate women, mothers or not, read and believed; it must be remembered, however, that Grymeston lived in a household where books were very much a part of everyday life, and in which not only Christian authors but the classics (mostly read in translation or in anthologies, but also in Latin, at least occasionally) had been incorporated into daily life. What Grymeston did with recent or classic authors was a way "to bring all knowledge to the service of God" (Beilin, p. 270). It is true that citing and using other's ideas had been, since the beginnings of humanism, something popular, very widespread, and was perceived as a proof of the intelligence and wisdom of the author. We could remember Erasmus' *Ciceronianus* as one of the most respected justifications for the integration of past authors and references within one's own text:

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[67] He led an interesting life that finished in Antwerpen in 1640. "Richard Rowlands". Encyclopedia Britannica. https://tinyurl.com/yrnswmzq. Accessed on 14 July 2025.
[68] "Robert Southwell". *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/biography/Robert-Southwell. Accessed 11 February 2024.

> Do bees collect the substance for making honey from just one shrub? Or do they not rather fly busily round every species of flower, grass, and shrub, often roaming far afield to gather material to store in their own hives? And what they bring back is not honey, to start with; they turn it into a new liquid by the action of their mouths and digestive organs…What we now here is the product of the little been itself, a compound of all that has gone to make that product up (Erasmus of Rotterdam, 1971: 706-7.)

The advice given by Erasmus here has been taken into account by the major humanists and creative writers of the Renaissance, but also by teachers and educators, both Catholic and Protestant alike. It had also been of course incorporated into England, where commonplace-books had become quite popular: individuals compiled the literary fragments they preferred on their own, they listed them into headings, and used them as reference for their writings and for their everyday lives. There even was a fashion for printed commonplace-books, which were used as manuals for individual behaviour (Moss, 1996)[69]. Grymeston's *Miscellanea* is not a commonplace-book and does not want to be one, but shares many features with them: the constant reference of previous authors, its lack of a narrative or plot, the variety of ways and directions in which it can be read or applied. It offers a selection of thoughts and prayers on several interrelated subjects (sin, death, the care of the soul, etc.) in which, in the end, the author's voice is entirely combined with the references she uses, through which her ideology and perspective become clear.

We will now go on to examine the main the topics she discusses in the *Miscellanea*, focusing on the ways in which (through original materials or not) the text still manages to reflect her individual religious and ethical perspective, and paying a specific attention to the way in which she puts this perspective at the service of her main project: the formation of her son's personality and sense of selfhood.

2.4 The Matter of Catholicism

The religious allegiance of Grymeston is certainly a very important matter, since it would probably determine the religious identity she wanted to transfer to her son through the pages of the *Miscellanea*. Among the specialized scholarship, Marsha

[69] The monograph by Ann Moss, *Printed Commonplace-Books and the Structuring of Renaissance Thought* (1986) covers especially well the relationship between commonplace-books and the concept of memory in the Renaissance.

Urban does not tackle the religious adscription of Grymeston (Urban, 2006: 40-43), Valerie Wayne considers her a Catholic (in Wilcox, 2009:65), as well as Matchinske (2002: 337), and Hughey and Hereford do not have a conclusive verdict, but they reckon that the strong disagreements Grymeston had with her mother, and which she refers to in the *Epistle* prefacing the book, could have had their origin in religious issues (Grymeston, 1606: A2r-v), even though she is not specific as to this. The *Epistle* states:

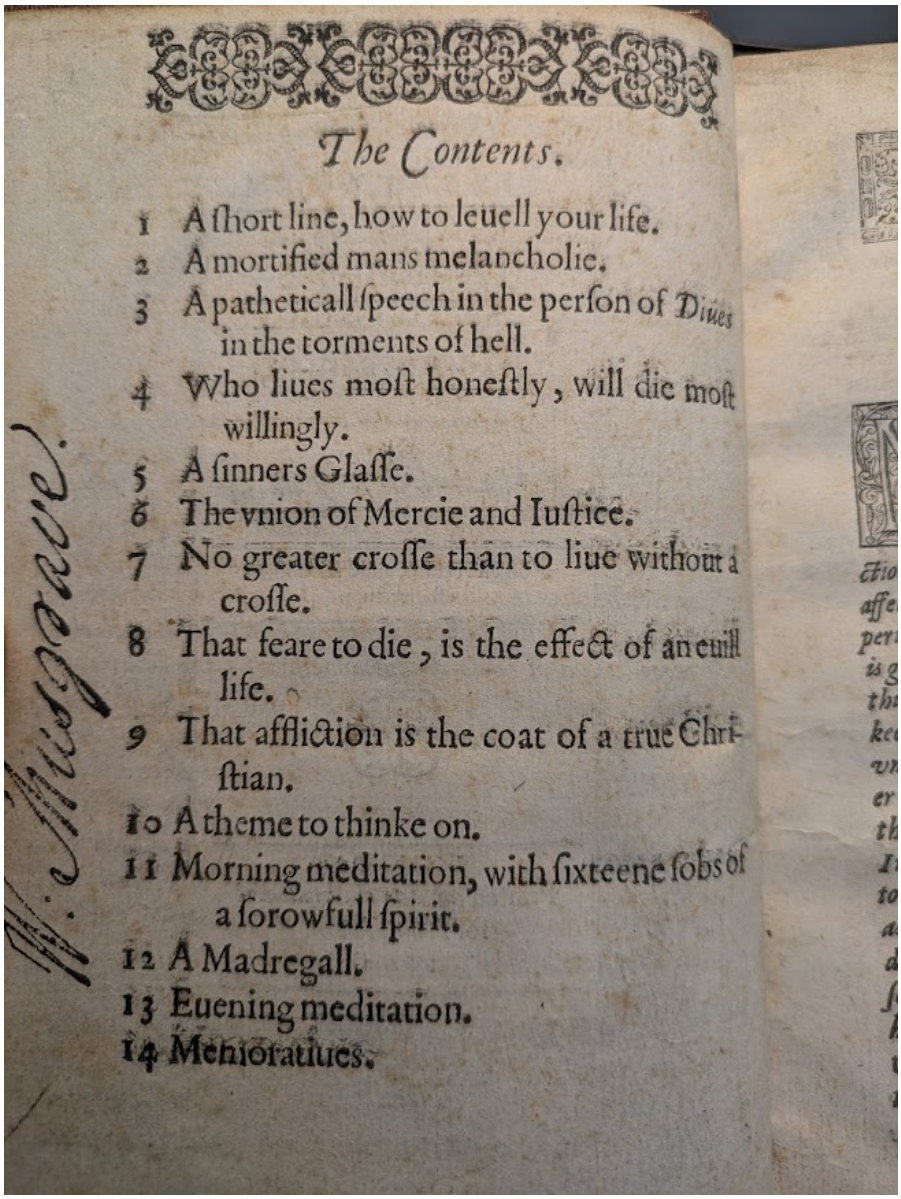
> "(…) and my mother's undeserved wrath so virulent, as that I have neither power to resist it, nor patience to endure it, but must yield to this languishing consumption to which it has brought me; I resolved to break the barren soil of my fruitless braine, to dictate some things for thy direction; the rather for that as I am now a dead woman among the living, so stand I doubtful of thy father's life (…)" (Grymestone, 1606: A2r-v).

We can be sure, therefore, that there was some disagreement among the family, we know that her mother's "wrath" was "so virulent", and that Elizabeth did not have "patience to endure it", but we cannot be certain that this was related at all to religious matters. More valid as a proof in this sense is the fact that her name appeared in the recusancy trials of 1592 and 1593, and that her father had been accused of Catholicism; Megan Matchinske asserts firmly, basing herself on these facts, that she was a Catholic ("Grymeston was, in all likelihood, a practicing Catholic", Matchstinke 2002: 337) basing herself on these historical facts, and also on the content of *Miscellanea* itself: "On two occasions the tract refers explicitly to "Catholicke martyrs of the Catholicke Church" and to "torments suffered for the Catholicke faith (sig. D6v, D7r)" (Matchstinke, 2002: 337).

On the other hand, and perhaps less objectively, Felicity Dunworth considers her a Catholic specifically because of the affection showed for her son in her text. Dunworth regards William Gouge's *Of Domesticall Duties* (published in 1622 and discussed in some detail above. in my Introduction), as a valid compendium of the Protestant English ideology regarding the household and, since it emerges form that tract and from others that it was common among Protestants to be restrained, stern and firm with children at home, she suggests that the affectionate discourse of Grymeston could in itself be a proof of her Catholicism (Dunworth, 2010: 202-203). It is interesting that Raymond A. Anselment should consider something completely different regarding tenderness: "(…) maternal nature and affection seem largely secondary, if not absent, in the "true portrait of thy mothers minde" (Grymeston, Epistle, A2v) that Grymeston leaves her son" (Anselment, 2004: 431-

453). In this case, I would personally tend to choose Dunworth's theory rather than for Anselment. In comparison with other Protestant writers like Elizabeth Walker, that I shall examine later in this thesis, Grymeston is noticeably more affectionate and tender, especially considering the rigour and seriousness that was common at the time. Elaine v. Beilin also considers that the author had some personal issues with Catholicism, and that this was perhaps the reason for her falling out with her mother, and also the main reason why the book was published posthumously (Beilin, 1987: 268). Even the sonnet that appears after the *Epistle* is written by a Franciscan author, Simon Grahame (this detail has been mentioned by Matchstinke, 2002: 337), even though it avoids any matters that might be controversial.

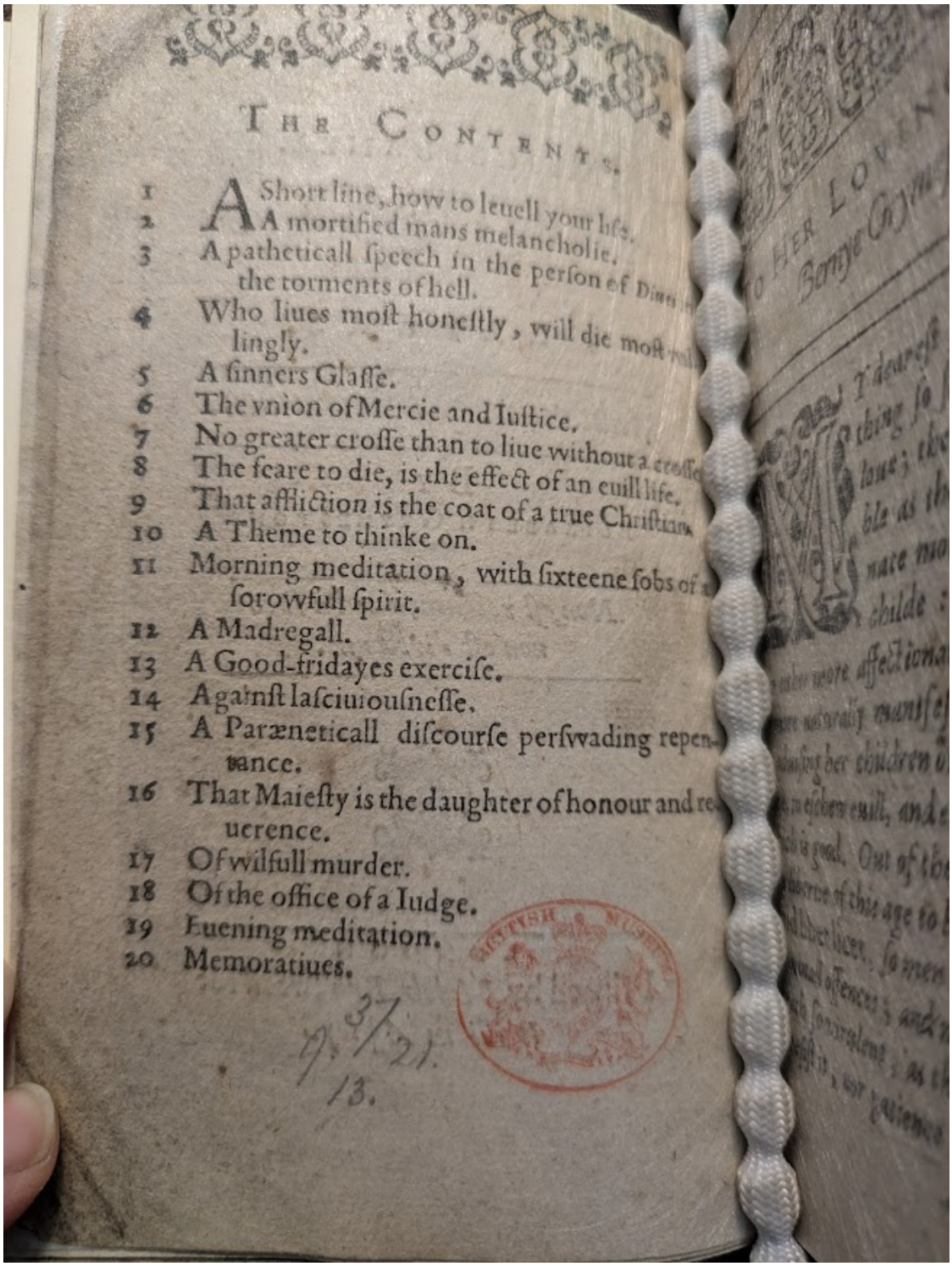
But there is more in Megan Matchinske's interpretation of Grymeston's religious position (Matchstinke, 2002). It is not only that Grymeston was a Catholic; she also considers that she might have used her position as a dying mother writing some last advice to her child in order to escape censorship. This is connected to the uncertain provenance of many of the quotations in the tract, and also to the fact that its entire authorship can hardly be confidently ascribed to Grymeston only. What Matchinske proposes in this specific article is that, to some extent, "equivocation" was present in the book, at least from its second edition (when its content was extended in six chapters) onwards. But what exactly does this concept imply?



The Contents.

1 A ſhort line, how to leuell your life.
2 A mortified mans melancholie.
3 A patheticall ſpeech in the perſon of Dives in the torments of hell.
4 Who liues moſt honeſtly, will die moſt willingly.
5 A ſinners Glaſſe.
6 The vnion of Mercie and Iuſtice.
7 No greater croſſe than to liue without a croſſe.
8 That feare to die, is the effect of an euill life.
9 That affliction is the coat of a true Chriſtian.
10 A theme to thinke on.
11 Morning meditation, with ſixteene ſobs of a ſorowfull ſpirit.
12 A Madregall.
13 Euening meditation.
14 Memoratiues.

Figure 23. These are the contents of the first edition, published in 1604. There are only fourteen chapters. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.



THE CONTENTS.

1 A Short line, how to leuell your life.
2 A mortified mans melancholie.
3 A patheticall ſpeech in the perſon of Dives in the torments of hell.
4 Who liues moſt honeſtly, will die moſt willingly.
5 A ſinners Glaſſe.
6 The vnion of Mercie and Iuſtice.
7 No greater croſſe than to liue without a croſſe
8 The feare to die, is the effect of an euill life.
9 That affliction is the coat of a true Chriſtian.
10 A Theme to thinke on.
11 Morning meditation, with ſixteene ſobs of a ſorowfull ſpirit.
12 A Madregall.
13 A Good-fridayes exerciſe.
14 Againſt laſciuiouſneſſe.
15 A Paræneticall diſcourſe perſwading repentance.
16 That Maieſty is the daughter of honour and reuerence.
17 Of wilfull murder.
18 Of the office of a Iudge.
19 Euening meditation.
20 Memoratiues.

Figure 24. This is the second edition of Miscelanea, published in 1606. We can see that six chapters have been added; these topics are controversial (murder, politics, justice, etc), and they may not be entirely the work of Grymeston herself. In this thesis, however, I have worked with the hypothesis that they are, following several scholars. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

On the fifth of November of 1605 a conspiracy against the monarchy had been discovered in London, led by several Catholic gentlemen (among them the famous Robert Catesby and Guy Fawkes); that conspiracy, known in England as the Gunpowder plot, triggered many anti-Catholic laws and various forms of persecution. The English authorities discovered in one of the perpetrators' rooms a tract entitled *A Treatise of Equivocation* (1598), by the English Jesuit Henry Garnet: this book instructed the hiding Catholics in England how to answer falsely the so-called "bloody questions", that is, questions that forced the Catholic believers to answer clearly whether they supported the monarchy or the Pope. Matchinske suggests that Grymeston's own *Myscellania*, at least in its augmented version after 1606, could be also "equivocal", since it could be in great part the work of a group of rebellious Catholics that used it as a way to spread their ideology (Matchinske, 2002: 334); it could be thus read also to some extent "equivocally" or as a coded text. And here I would tend to come to a similar conclusion: it seems to me that Grymeston is trying to achieve in her text some sort of union between two distant religious ideologies in England; even when quoting her favorite references, the metaphors gathered in the advice-book text seem to favor this desired union. For instance, a paragraph describing the crucifixion of Christ as a union of grief and comfort could also be interpreted as expressing the hope for the union of the two opposed factions, Catholic and Protestant, in England:

> Christ suffered upon the cross: that's *my griefe*. Christ suffered upon the cross for me: that's *my comfort*. Christ suffered death that I might know him man. Christ *suffered death* and *arose again* in despite of death (…) (Grymeston, 1606, D6r).

Here apparently contrary aspects (joy and pain, humanity and divinity of Christ, death and life) are joined together in the crucifixion; this union of opposites would seem impossible, but it has become a fact in the cross: in the same way, a similar impossibility (the union of Catholics and Protestants) may certainly come to pass. We must point out that this is certainly not the only way in which this text can be read, but if we choose to see it in this way, it is certainly a fortunate possibility and offers a suggestive interpretation. It may therefore be not a coincidence that Catholics are mentioned twice in this specific chapter, or that they are presented as martyrs who suffered and died for their beliefs. The fact that her family name appeared in the 1592-1593 recusancy trials, as stated above, confirms that her absence at the established church had been noticed (Matchinske, 2002:

337), and thus seems to connect strongly her private beliefs with several passages of the *Miscellanea*.

In any case, this aspect is not the sole one that guaranteed success to Grymeston's book, and that made it the success it was. I will incorporate it into my analysis, but I will especially take into account the places in which the mother's religious choices reveal themselves when addressing the spiritual formation of her son. This aspect will be considered here, but not placing it above other considerations (spiritual in a general sense, ethical or political) in her motherly advice for her Bernye.

2.5 Memento Mori

"Mrs. Grymeston's book is primarily a series of poetic meditations on death (…)" states Christine Sizemore before proceeding to compare Grymestone's work to the advice books by Elizabeth Joscelyn and Dorothy Leigh (Sizemore, 1977: 46). And this is certainly true: the possibility of her own death makes Grymeston reflect deeply and vividly on this topic, extending the theme though many pages of the *Miscellanea* and exploring its many possibilities in multiple directions. In this section, I would like to show how this preoccupation can be seen as a unifying factor that underlies the whole work from start to finish, binding together the many preoccupations of the text. A miscellaneous text, by definition, cannot have a thematic unity, but this does not mean that there is no dominating subject in it; often it is explicitly addressed, but it is also present behind the many other topics that the collection considers (theological, moral, political). I hope to show here that Grymeston's deep concern with this subject is not only theoretical: that, on the one hand, it responds to her cultural environment and that, on the other, it is firmly rooted in her personal experience as a mother.

Chapter three, for instance, begins by offering a sorrowful expression of suffering not during death, but after it. This lamentation is imaginatively set in the mouth of one fictional Dives, the rich man whose well-known story was told in the gospel by Luke (16: 19-31). His voice is vividly rendered by Grimeston, as she evokes his sufferings:

> Oh death, howe sudden was thy arrest unto me? Howe unexpected? While my bodie was strong, while my intrales were full of fat and my bones were watered with marrow, while I had rest in my substance, and peace in my riches, in one night my soule

> was taken from me, and all my joy was turned into mourning (Grymestone, 1606: B1r).

The immediate reaction that is awakened in the reader is not one of distance or of moral judgement of the character, but rather one of compassion. The experience that Dives phrases here is in fact quite common: his death was "sudden" and "unexpected", he has had his bodily substance transformed both in his "intrales" and his "bones" (let us note the insistence on physicality), going "in one night" from "joy…into mourning". The emphasis is therefore not put on the selfishness of Dives, but on the common nature of his death, and this is a major motivation for Grymeston's feeling of compassion. In her interpretation, this story certainly compels us not to sin, but at the same time it preserves a sense of some sympathy for the figure of the rich man who suffers, in an imaginative exercise that might be taken as a proof of her humanism. She is using this story in order to insist on the general advice she is trying to give to her son, reminding him that one's time on earth should be spent in an attitude of vigilance, since death comes surprisingly and does not wait for anyone. The story of Dives and Lazarus retains here, it is true, its traditional moralism opposing poverty and riches (Dives did not live "honestly", as the chapter title recommends: "Who lives most honestly, will die most willingly"), but it is clearly used here to discuss the physical experience of death. And its general meaning is clear: to live honestly is also a way of practicing the classical injunction, *Memento mori.*

Towards the end of chapter three we find some sense of reference to herself emerging: Grymeston seems to be making room in the text for her own experience, explaining how terrible her sickness has been and how it has changed her perception of life. Even if briefly, she seems to consider herself and her body as a valid exemplary topic, and turns her attention towards her own plight. The text seems to become, at this specific point, a way to vent off her personal tortures and her own fight with death. "(I am) in torture without intermission: where my lascivious eyes are afflicted with most ugly and fearfull sights of griefly divels; my eares that once were delicate, are laden now with the hideous noise of damned spirites (…)" (Grymeston, 1606: B2r-v). The imagery that she uses is certainly very familiar, and the content is far from original, but there is here a sense of bodily degeneration that rings true, and that must necessarily correspond to her own experience.

The whole of the commentary on the gospel story of Dives and Lazarus, and the whole of the chapter, are addressed one very specific reader; the sense of compassion and that might emerge from the text must therefore be awakened

primarily in one person: her son. Immediately after this story, Grymeston directs her discourse pointedly towards him in order to make sure that he has understood her. She reminds him that everyone will come to trial in the final judgement, so that he needs to consider the fact that God is watching his every movement. The second person, therefore, becomes dominant in the discourse: "*You* go & are always going to make *your* appearance before the tribunal seat of God, where every man shall receive according to his works (…) what *you* sow is what *you* reape" (Grymeston, 1606: B4r-B5r). The whole of the text is therefore explicitly addressed to its specific reader, and it becomes formative in the development of that reader. We begin to see here the connection between the dominant themes of motherhood and of death, that will become more and more clearly combined as the text advances.

In the fourth chapter, Grymeston continues her commentary on the harsh reality of death, through the voice of Edmund Spenser (in a slightly erroneous quote, which turns its first two lines into a rhetorical question). Life in itself is not to be trusted, and only provides tears to those who are born into it:

> For what's the life of man, but euen a tragedie,
> Full of sad sighes, and sore catastrophes?
> First comming to the world with weeping eye,
> Where all his dayes like dolorous trophes,
> Are heapt with spoiles of fortune and of feare.
> (Grymeston, 1606: B5v).[70]

Spenser's lines are of a piece with the discourse offered by Grymeston; while the text shifts from prose to verse, the main content of the discourse remains the same. Already we can see here the role of the quotations in the published text as conventional pieces of knowledge and wisdom. But it is inevitable to think that, to Elizabeth Grymeston herself, they also could work as commentaries on her own private life. Certainly, we can see the quotes as a theoretical frame for life, as they were in the eyes of the public, but the practical application of this theory was in fact her own sad life and experience. The "tragedie", the weeping eyes, or the "dolorous trophies" that appear in this quote, are not a true description of the very events in her life? At one intimate level at least, she must have known that she was commenting on herself through those chosen lines, and also knowing how true the lines could be through her own experience.

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[70] The text is reshaping of Robert Albott's work. Albott, Robert: *Englands Parnassus*. Page 167. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A16884.0001.001/1:6.100?rgn=div2;view=fulltext Accessed on 12th February 2024.

If this function of the text was real, as it surely was for her and for her son Bernie, it must have worked effectively for the two of them. Let us notice how this works together with the public construction of herself as a wise and learned woman, who offers classic advice on the *memento mori* that will be good for the readers. From chapter IV comes the following fragment:

> Who can he in his studie and looke on his houre-glasse, and say not to himselfe, *Vt hora, sic fugit vita?* that thy life is spent with the houre? Who can walke in the Sunne, and looke on his shadow, and not say with *Pindarus, Vmbrae somnium homo,* Man is but the dreame of a shadow? (Grymeston, 1606: B6v).

The first Latin quotation was popular as a motto inscribed in sundials or hourglasses, and indeed the image of the hourglass is present in this very text, as if the reader himself or herself was looking at it. The second quotation, "umbrae somnium homo", comes originally from the Greek poet Pindar, though Grymeston mentions it in its typical Latin form (*Pythian Odes*, VIII, 97) and is a classic reference in humanistic texts. The effect of the entire paragraph is to create a sense of continuity with the classical past that would be entirely at home in any humanistic compilation of commonplaces. And this is part of the author's intention here: to address an audience that must in part have been popular, but which to a certain extent must have been made of learned readers too, and for whom these quotes would be very familiar.

2.6 Justice and the Tradition of *Ars Moriendi*

Chapter six offers fascinating evidence of a peculiar superposition of a late medieval tradition with an early modern sense of intimacy. The title, *The Union of Mercie and Justice*, might seem to suggest a political intention, since these two had been attributes that some Tudor monarchs, notably Queen Elizabeth, had attributed these qualities to themselves as essential aspects of their reign. But the whole intention of the chapter rather tends towards the intimate and private aspects of life.

The author advises her son Bernie not to take advantage of the mercy of God. She author reflects on the value of divine punishment and occasionally might seem to recreate an old Spanish saying ("Quien bien te quiere te hará llorar"): "The words of a friend are better than the flattering of a foe, and he that loves with austerity is better than he that kills with delicacie" (Grymeston, 1606: C1v). This is an important piece of advice for those who look for approval by others; truth is

better than flattering. In relation to this subject, Grymeston once more adds a fragment extracted from *England's Parnassus,* this time authored by Edmund Spenser:

> O who shall show the countenance and gestures
> Of mercy and justice? which faire sacred sisters
> With equal poize do euer ballance euen,
> Th'vnchanging proiects of the king of heauen. (…)
> Th'one beares the sword of vengeance vnrelenting,
> Th'other kings pardon, for the true repenting.
> The one earths Eden, which Adam did dismisse,
> Th'other hath raisde him to a higher blisse Spenser
> (Grymeston, 1606: C1r).

This fragment by Spenser shows the qualities of mercy and justice as two sisters balancing the entire universe, in the allegorical form that was so dear to that poet: the first is associated with the "sword of vengeance", the other with the "kings pardon". When Spenser used these contrasts, he doubtless included in them their political connotations, since royal pardon had been a prerogative of Elizabeth's reign, and one which she had used quite strategically in her administration of justice. Grymeston doubtless considers these aspects as well when quoting him and integrating him in her own text, but she is clearly interested in the reference to Adam and the loss of Eden towards the end of the fragment. Because Adam's fall had bought about the coming of death into the world, and that is one of the topics that Grymeston considers as more decisive for the configuration of her (and therefore, her son Bernie's) worldview.

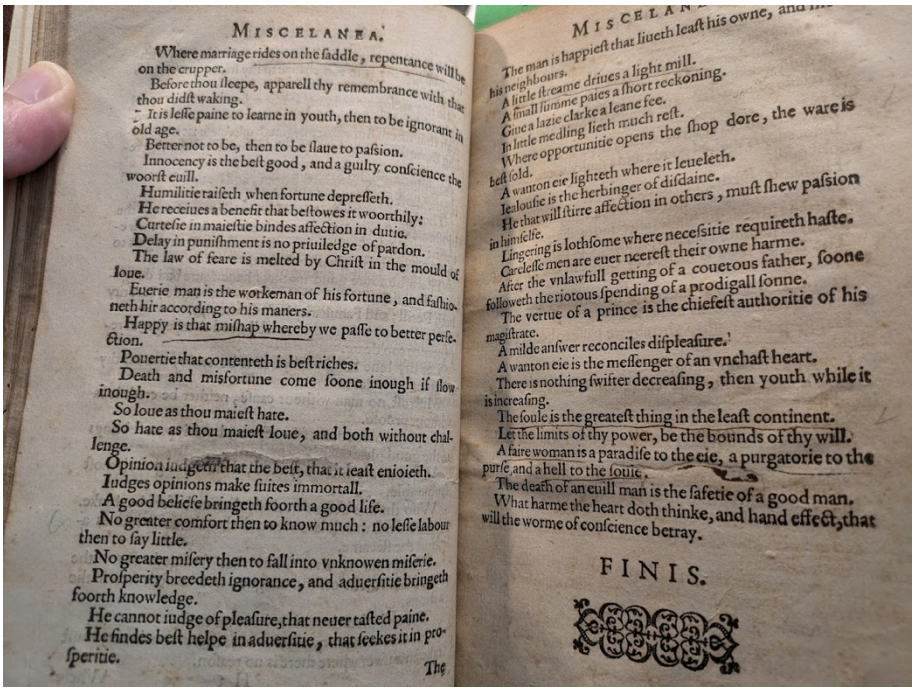
And yet is not death that Grymeston fears deeply; her strongest fear is that of the damnation of the soul. Because death, to a certain extent, had been integrated in the domain of the everyday, and its rituals and institutional demands had become a part of the domestic environment. Using a phrase coined by Philippe Ariès, this is the period of the domesticity of death (Ariès, 1981). Everyone In early modernity was aware of the fact that death was always on the brink of happening, and instead of hiding or trying to escape it, they turned to consider what came after it. The ritual was indeed partly public, as public was the dying room; children were often welcome to witness it: this was the world of the *Ars Moriendi* treatises, which specified with great detail what was to be done in these crucial last moments (Ruiz García, 2013). The only pressing aspect was the lack of a sufficient time of

preparation, because in that time the dying subject could make peace with the world and with oneself, and all the necessary arrangements could be carried out[71].

Not many changes were brought about concerning the *Ars Moriendi* in the Protestant world; these rituals, that were quite well-established in Europe, had become an intimate part of the identity of families. As Gordon Raeburn states, "not all of the early strands of reform believed that all of the practices and rituals which surrounded death should be stripped away, and in certain cases some aspects of death and culture were left intact" (Raeburn, 2020: 158). If there was any alteration, according to Raeburn, it was not of the same kind everywhere, and not necessarily dictated by theological difference: "There was no single Reformation of death and burial. There was never simply a Protestant way of death. Different reformers had different beliefs on the subject, and ultimately this led to a range of practice across the European continent" (Raeburn, 2020: 156). Another thing was the public expression of grief; in general Protestants were not against external proofs of sorrow, if they were not too excessive: "For most reformers, emotions had their place at a funeral, but those displays of mourning should not be allowed to become excessive" (Raeburn, 2020: 170). On the other hand, it is true that in England the rites of intercession had been strictly forbidden, and this had brought a stop to the tradition of prayers for the dead; this necessarily implied that, in contrast with what happened in Catholic cultures, at least one accepted form of expressing sorrow was now stifled (as we shall see later in chapter 4, in the case of Elizabeth Walker, Protestant expressions of sorrow quite often tended to be very restrained or stifled). As Randall Martin states, the dominating idea through the whole of her book could be: "He that liveth well, shall maketh a good end" (Martin, 1997: 98).

Grymeston offers to the reader (that is, to her son Bernie) a summary of these beliefs; for her, a good life is inextricably connected and linked to a good death. Her book, if it should be described in only a few words, is in a certain way an extended reminder of this belief, which was almost universal at that time.

[71] This is extraordinarily explained by Philippe Ariès; see note 2 in this chapter.



MISCELANEA.

Where marriage rides on the saddle, repentance will be on the crupper.
Before thou sleepe, apparell thy remembrance with that thou didst waking.
It is lesse paine to learne in youth, then to be ignorant in old age.
Better not to be, then to be slaue to passion.
Innocency is the best good, and a guilty conscience the woorst euill.
Humilitie raiseth when fortune depresseth.
He receiues a benefit that bestowes it woorthily:
Curtesie in maiestie bindes affection in duttie.
Delay in punishment is no priuiledge of pardon.
The law of feare is melted by Christ in the mould of loue.
Euerie man is the workeman of his fortune, and fashioneth hir according to his maners.
Happy is that mishap whereby we passe to better perfection.
Pouertie that contenteth is best riches.
Death and misfortune come soone inough if slow inough.
So loue as thou maiest hate.
So hate as thou maiest loue, and both without challenge.
Opinion iudgeth that the best, that it least enioieth.
Iudges opinions make suites immortall.
A good beliefe bringeth foorth a good life.
No greater comfort then to know much: no lesse labour then to say little.
No greater misery then to fall into vnknowen miserie.
Prosperity breedeth ignorance, and aduersitie bringeth foorth knowledge.
He cannot iudge of pleasure, that neuer tasted paine.
He findes best helpe in aduersitie, that seekes it in prosperitie.

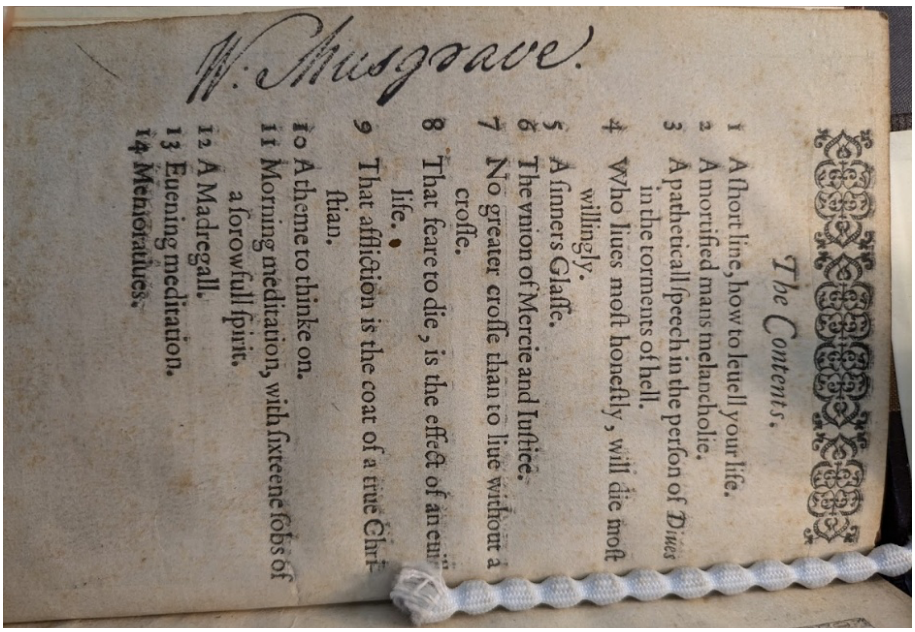
The

MISCELAN

The man is happiest that liueth least his owne, and
his neighbours.
A little ifcreame driues a light mill.
A small summe paies a short reckoning.
Giue a lazie clarke a leane fee.
In little medling lieth much rest.
Where opportunitie opens the shop dore, the ware is best sold.
A wanton eie lighteth where it leueleth.
Iealousie is the herbinger of disdaine.
He that will stirre affection in others, must shew passion in himselfe.
Lingering is lothsome where necessitie requireth haste.
Carelesse men are euer neerest their owne harme.
After the vnlawfull getting of a couetous father, soone followeth the riotous spending of a prodigall sonne.
The vertue of a prince is the chiefest authoritie of his magistrate.
A milde answer reconciles displeasure.
A wanton eie is the messenger of an vnchast heart.
There is nothing swifter decreasing, then youth while it is increasing.
The soule is the greatest thing in the least continent.
Let the limits of thy power, be the bounds of thy will.
A faire woman is a paradise to the eie, a purgatorie to the purse, and a hell to the soule.
The death of an euill man is the safetie of a good man.
What harme the heart doth thinke, and hand effect, that will the worme of conscience betray.

FINIS.

Figure 25. The 1604 edition of the Miscelanea in the British Library had belonged to a seventeenth-century owner, who underlined the passages that he/she considered most interesting. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.



W. Musgrave.

The Contents.

1 A short line, how to leuell your life.
2 A mortified mans melancholie.
3 A pathetical speech in the person of *Dives* in the torments of hell.
4 Who liues most honestly, will die most willingly.
5 A sinners Glasse.
6 The vnion of Mercie and Iustice.
7 No greater crosse than to liue without a crosse.
8 That feare to die, is the effect of an euill life.
9 That affliction is the coat of a true Christian.
10 A theme to thinke on.
11 Morning meditation, with sixteene sobs of a sorowfull spirit.
12 A Madrigall.
13 Euening meditation.
14 Memoratiues.

Figure 26. The name of the owner of this copy of Miscelanea in the British Library (W. Musgrave) is handwritten on the margin of the table of contents. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

2.7 The Cross as a Text and the Care of the Soul

In chapter nine ("Affliction is the coat of a Christian") Grymeston defends the value of poverty and suffering, of which Christ was the primary example, as the main way to live Christian lives. While this theme was far from being original

within the Reformation, what matters here is, as always, her particular approach and the emphases she chooses to touch upon. She elaborates this subject while writing on the topic of the crucifixion, and comes to offer an elaborate allegorical approach to it, in chapter IX.

> Let the Mount Calvarie be our school, the Crosse our pulpit, the Crucifix our meditation, his wounds our letters, his lashes our commaes, his nailes our full points, his open side our book (…) (Grymeston, 1606: C4v).

Let us observe how all the images here are adequately interconnected, establishing a parallelism between the subject of the crucifixion and that of education. The metaphors that Grymestone uses in here are quite touching and bold. She is imagining the body of Christ as a text that must be read by the worshipper, and the experience of imagining that naked body in Golgotha becomes similar to the experience of a reader that is being schooled or educated. That body is marked with the marks of suffering as a text is with punctuation signs (wounds, lashes and nails as letters, commas and full points): they are the references that allow the reader to articulate a text and give it meaning. That reader, following the comparison, is the good Christian (in this particular case, her son Bernie), and the remembrance and study of the cross has, as one of its intended effects, the assimilation of suffering as an essential condition of life.

Remembering the cross does not always imply a concentration on suffering, but also implies a simple preservation of faith, which is in itself a basic way of caring for the soul. In Randall Martin's study (Martin, 1997: 112-114), we find a detailed list of the major symbols and metaphors used by the author and their relation to the Bible. A significant one is used at the beginning of chapter IX: she uses the story of emperor Constantine (AD 280-337) to exemplify how the cross will protect us if we use it –metaphorically- as an emblem on our persons and shields. That familiar story comes from Eusebius' *Life of Constantine*[72]: in a dream, the emperor saw a cross over the sun with the motto *In hoc signo vinces*, while he was preparing for battle; he was told by Christ that he had to paint crosses on his soldiers' shields if he wanted to win, as he eventually did. When re-telling this story, Grymeston is advising her son to let Christ be his shield, encouraging him in the constant remembrance of the cross. Yet the superposition of the image of the cross on the shield implies also the presence of another topic here: the idea of the shield

[72] The whole book can be accessed online. Cameron, Averil & Hall, Stuart G. *Life of Constantine*. Clarendon. Oxford, 1999. https://tinyurl.com/yn3fvhh6. Accessed on May 4th 2024.

of faith, that had been abundantly commented by medieval and Renaissance authors. This image comes from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, 6, where Paul recommends taking up the shield of faith against the arrows of the devil: the whole story, as retold by Grymeston, thus implies the concept of life as a constant war, in which the remembrance of the cross will the best protection against the wiles of the devil. Remembering the cross and its significance is thus recommended to Bernie as the basic, fundamental form of faith in his intended identity as a Christian.

In chapter X, "A theme to think on", Grymeston assures that we have been created because of God's only will, and that such an act of creation needs to be met with gratitude, with a pure life and obedience to the creator. It is only because of God's will that we are here; the service of men and women to him is the only adequate response to it: "And the same God that created thee of nothing, preserves thee from all things that might annoy thee; gives thee health and plenty, and subjected all things to thy service, that thou might serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of thy life" (Grymeston, 1606: C5v). Again, the instinct, temptations and appetites of the body should not stain the individual soul, that is the home of God: "Thy soule is the temple of the Holy Ghost, thou must not pollute it with brutish appetites" (Grymeston, 1606: C6r). Above all, it is not physical death that she is afraid of (or that Bernie should be afraid of) but eternal damnation: "Staine not the beautie of thy parts, lest thou susteine miserie in this life with the losse of eternall life: for the stipend of sinne is death, and the merit of transgression is eternall perdition (Grymeston, 1606: C6v).

The preservation of the soul, of what Grymeston sees as the "temple of the Holy Ghost", must be carried out through constant attention to the needs of the soul and, if need be, through an open acceptance of suffering. In the protestant world and despite the many doctrinal changes that had occurred, the concept of life as a valley of tears was still largely accepted: this still implied a rejection of pleasure, understanding this term as an enjoyment of the beauty of life. Johann Huizinga, in his classic book *The Waning of the Middle Ages*, expressed it very well: "Rigorist puritanism still condemned, as it had done in the Middle Ages, the entire sphere of life's beauty because it was worldly and sinful, unless it adopted expressly religious shapes and sanctified itself, putting itself to the service of faith" (Huizinga, 1954: 48). Grymeston was in all probability a Catholic, but she lived in a protestant context, where the joys of life were still considered suspicious and seen as a danger to the purity of the soul. As in the Middle Ages, suffering was associated with salvation (though it was no longer seen as a guarantee of it).

2.8 Prayer, Sin and Divine Compassion

Meditation and prayer were key to the well-being of the soul among Catholics, Protestants and Puritans. The *Book of Common Prayer* had been published in 1549 and authorized by the Church of England; it was revised in 1552, 1559, 1604 and 1662 (its revision of 1662 is still used today in the Anglican world). Grymeston undoubtedly knew about the *Book of Common Prayer* and coincides with it in many of its Biblical quotes, but without ever using it directly. What is important for her is the exercise of prayer, reaching beyond it and going into extended meditations, which was already an established tradition among protestants. In this chapter, she once more walks the line between religious denominations, offering a text that could be equally accepted by all.

The religious world of English women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries has been well studied by several scholars of note. The coexistence of Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans was not easy, but all of them attributed a similar function to religiosity among women. For all of them, prayer was an essential practice, and piety was a field that was always open to their self-expression:

> Piety was especially important for women, because there were few other avenues through which they could legitimately express their faith. Women could not become priests, ministers or theologians. They did not sit in Parliaments which debated religion, nor did they make or administer the policies of the church. After the Reformation, when only those Catholic women who could afford to travel abroad could express their spirituality through a monastic life, lay piety was an accepted and approved area of activity for both Protestant and Catholic women (Crawford, 1993: 75).

Crawford also states that the association of piety with Puritanism is a mistake, since this renovated passion towards spirituality and meditation comes from Erasmus "and diverged only after the Council of Trent" (Crawford, 1999: 76). This introspection would lead to a new discovery for English women: the awakening of intimacy and of a distinctly personal spiritual life. Grymeston's words seem indeed to echo firmly this tendency: "Happie is the man whose life is a continuall prayer" (Grymeston: C6v).

This same chapter (XI) (quite long for her standards, and longer indeed than others) offers an extended morning meditation, which makes repeated use of poetry in its development. According to Hughey and Hereford, none of the poetry that is

incorporated in this particular meditation is original; on the contrary, it is based on the works of the unfortunate Robert Southwell, Richard Rowlands and Simon Grahame. All of them were Catholic poets (Hughey and Hereford, 1943: 78-79). But what is most interesting for us is the prose text in itself, and its particular tone and accent. The speaker begins quite conventionally: "Grant, o sonne of God, that was made man, that men might become the sons of God, that I might live in thy fear, die in thy favour, rest in thy peace, rise in thy power, remain in thy glory for ever and ever" (Grymeston, 1606: C8v). There seems to be here a correspondence between living in fear of God and dying in his favour, just as there seems to be one between resting in God's peace and rising in his power, a correspondence that might involve a logical understanding of the acts of God. Syntactically, however, there is not a direct sense of consequence between the first terms of these binary parallel structures and the latter ones, even though their pairing might still suggest the existence of a connection between them (this long sentence will, by the way, be repeated literally at the end of the meditation). It soon becomes clear that this extended prayer revolves around sins and the fear of being punished. The speaking subject sees herself (or himself) as a sinner who needs to be forgiven by Christ:

> Lord, I am depressed with the burden of my sinnes, and oppressed with the feare of the punishment belonging to them; hauing neither power to resist thy wrath, nor patience to endure thy indignation: wherefore I am becomes as it doth become me, thy humble suppliant. Lord be mercifull to me, a sinner. (Grymeston, 1606: C7r).

This last demand is a direct quote from the gospels, extracted from Luke 18: 13. Thus in these words we can see again dejection and fear but also, at the end and in the biblical quote, hope for forgiveness and redemption. It is at this point that divine compassion makes itself openly present in the text: there seems indeed to be room for repentance and for pardon, as the final hope lies on the pity of God rather than on his judgement; the believer still can still hope for his salvation. This is not a cruel or vengeful God:

> Gratious God, whose honour is more in sauing through pitty, then in condemning through iudgement, thou that canst mitigate griefes present, and canst turne away dangers to come: pardon, I beseech thee, my sinnes past, aide me against all temptations to come, and I shall praise thy name for euer and euer (Grymeston, 1606: c7r).

There seems to be the intention (perhaps only rhetorical) of establishing a bargain between God and the speaker, in which God would erase any past sins and aid against future temptations, in return for the life-long praise that would be afterwards given to Him. This exchange might be seen as revealing the Catholic inheritance of Grymeston, since, taken to the letter, it would work against the notion of all- powerful and gratuitous grace that was so dear to the protestants. But this detail, even though it may be theologically significant, may also become irrelevant for the reader if one considers that it is the result of a potent dramatic emphasis, which might also occur in a fully reformed text. What certainly becomes clear in this extended prayer is the need for self-analysis and the permanent remembrance of one's own status as a sinner: this is where its repeated emphasis lies, and the prayer as a whole is oriented towards this. And if we take into account that the intended reader is Bernie himself, we must conclude that Grymeston's intention is none other than eventually helping her son become a meditative subject: one who will always be ready to undertake the serious and sober mental work that Christian prayer requires.

2.9 Meditations on the Cross and Martyrdom

Chapter XIII is another long meditation, this time concentrating on the cross ("A Good Fridayes exercise, or a Meditation of the Cross"), especially meant for Good Friday, the day commemorating the crucifixion. It is here that the divergences with the dominant protestant thought become most evident, and where the connotations of Grymeston's adherence to Catholicism become most clearly present, showing a persistence that cannot be explained only through the strength of tradition. Through a discourse that is significantly full of paradoxes -motivated by her theology-, she moves from the contemplation of the cross towards a serious exploration of martyrdom.

As we could expect, Grymeston's prayer expresses admiration and wonder before the miracle of the cross: "He suffered on the Cross, that's the misery: Christ suffered to rise again, that's the glory. It is a miracle beyond admiration, for misery to contain glory, for death to bring forth life, for sadness to beget joy" (Grymeston, 1606: D6r). This central paradox - death bringing forth life and sadness begetting joy-, opens the way for a major theme in this meditation: the power of martyrdom, seen not only as a testimony of Christianity, but as having a transformative power on the body of the martyrs themselves. The power of martyrdom had, of course, been abundantly used by the Protestant authorities in their own propaganda: John

Foxe's famous volume, *Acts and Documents*, had become popularly known as the *Book of Martyrs*, a misname that Foxe himself was angry about. Foxe and his various imitators had sought to emphasize the value of sacrifice and the exemplary quality of Christian victims of popery, and had presented seemingly endless examples of martyrs as exemplary in the fight against Catholicism. Grymeston's attitude is here quite different, even opposed to this position. For her, the bodies of the martyrs are not only the proof of their faith, but become spaces of wonder, where apparent sadness indeed becomes joy. This might seem once more the remnant of the ancient cult of the saints, but in fact Grymeston is consciously going further into the concept, and using it in ways that go beyond its conventional use.

The repertoire that she uses is quite indicative of her theological positon. Had she been a Protestant believer, she might as well have taken as an example the martyrdom of Protestants saints who died under the kingdom of Mary Tudor, as Hughey and Hereford reckon (p. 78); instead, she concentrates on figures such as Saint Agatha, Saint Lawrence or Saint Cecily. Agatha's tortures on the rack, where her breasts or "papes" were cut, are evoked here, together with the consolation that she had in prison, where Saint Peter appeared to her, spiritual plenitude seems to coincide with bodily suffering. The same logic is applied to the figures of St Lawrence and St Cecily, whose pleasure is compared to that enjoyed by Sardanapalus and Helen of Troy: Sardanapalus did not die happier than Saint Lawrence in his rack of torment, while "perfumed Helen was not so sweet, in all her odoriferous balms, as was Saint Cycily in the smoke of her martyrdome" (Grymeston, 1606: Ev-r). The tortured bodies of the martyrs are themselves paradoxical: they are presented as physical sites of plenitude and well-being, even in the moment of their torture.

This paradox also corresponds to the birth of faith out of sinfulness, that Catholic martyrs –and they are explicitly called so- help to come about: "Even so are the martyrs of the Catholic church, first break out of the dead seed of original sin by Baptism (…)" (Grymeston, 1606: E2r). They are also compared with worms, that produce silk as they grow (that is, in the process of martyrdom) but turn into butterflies when their growth (their suffering) is over. The pointed emphasis on the physicality of the victims of persecution need not be indicative of her doctrinal position –after all, Foxe had made a good use of it-, but her whole conception of suffering as coinciding with blessedness, and even with joy, is entirely coherent with Catholic sensibilities in this period. This is one of the moments, therefore, where Grymeston's text becomes more clearly fixed in doctrinal terms.

As a whole, this is a very passionate and interesting chapter, its paradoxical style being very representative of the style that Grymestone prefers. At the beginning, we find an impressive description of the meditations that the cross provokes on the author:

> (…) I seek for glory, from the fountain of glory: but finde misery beyond humane misery. I expect gladness, as from the author of comfort: but finde sadness, such, as my tongue cannot utter. I looke for life, at the giver of life: But finde death more deadly than any death. I come as a man to visit God: but finde God become the sonne of man, that man might become the sonne of God. What I search, I cannot finde: what I finde, I cannot deliver (Grymeston, 1606: D5v).

The cleverest idea here, beautifully expressed, is the contradiction inherent in life and the frustration of never obtaining any satisfaction to our desire ("What I search, I cannot finde: what I finde, I cannot deliver"); no matter how hard we try, we will not obtain what we want, perhaps only what we need. But one could say that this is exactly what the cross itself represents: the union of the celestial and the earthly world, the union of two opposite realities.[73]. At least one scholar, the above-quoted Megan Matchinske, has seen in these very words (words that seem to have been originally written by Robert Albott) the expression of Grymeston's desired union between the two denominations, Catholic and Protestant (Matchstinke, 2002: 333). That may be the case, but I consider them rather as an intuition on one of the intimate meanings that the cross had for her. The cross is redemption through suffering, it is joy through pain, it is hope in despair: an image of the contradictions which Grymeston experienced in her actual life.

2.10 Lust

Chapter XIII is a meditation against lasciviousness, made once more for the benefit of Bernie, her reader/son. Grymeston ostensibly follows traditional themes in this chapter, using easily recognizable tropes, but as we shall see, her meditations are still strongly rooted on references to the body, to the essential experience of

[73] Juan Eduardo Cirlot has described this perception with an abundance of details in his powerful *Diccionario de Símbolos*. According to this author, the cross can be seen as an inversion of the primary tree of life, and involves an astounding multitude of possible significations: in the crucifixion, different and opposite worlds are put together, so that it becomes the point of union between the moon and the sun, between the good thief and the evil one, between the Virgin and Saint John, between the spear and the Grail. See Cirlot, 1994: 153-154.

physicality. Interestingly, her discussion of this topic seems to open itself up momentarily to a sense of forgiveness or tolerance through a reference to the Gospels, but as we shall see, this is only apparent: this reference is ultimately made to work against any sense of relaxation or loss of vigilance in the preservation against the sins of the body that she recommends to her son.

She begins by stating a commonplace: that it is a mistake to be permissive with lust, because lust is a disease, like serpigo (a form of skin ulcer), that is always growing. Grymeston regards lust as an appetite that is never fully satisfied, and that sooner or later attacks everyone and everywhere: "…creeping like a serpigo, from the courte, to the cubben: from the princes palace, to the mounckes sell" (Grymeston, 1606: E4v). It is thus similar to death; it touches everyone, and not even saints can be free of it. This metaphor, while conventional, offers an inversion from the pleasant to the painful, but remaining always within the realm of the physical. Grymeston considers clearly and without a doubt that lust is female, following the tradition of the medieval allegorisation of this sin; she also recurs to the familiar trope of the siren, which allows her to pay with the notion that temptation is hidden in the arms of a woman: "Covering the face of the earth with *her* leprosie, and Syren like, enchanting every men of what degree soever, and where *she* gets entertainment, she never ceaseth, still spending bodie and goodes, from a bruttish beginning *she* bringes them to a beggerly end" (Grymeston, 1606: E4v). The notion of "spending" (in the modern sense of consuming) both body and goods insists metaphorically on the notion of physical degeneration; like death itself, lust makes poverty out of richess, and death out of youth. Grymeston here accepts without any hint of trouble the common idea that women were the seed of lust while writing for her son: female writing puts itself to the service of a misogynistic ideology. This, in itself, was not uncommon: as Valerie Wayne and other authors have stated[74], books of advice often supported the ideological work that many men had provided, even though they offered a way to vent off though writing the heavy burdens of motherhood, marriage and death.

Grymeston goes on to mention several examples of sinners, among whom we can find "Lassivinius Rodricus" (that is, Roderick the lustful), king of Ireland, a "monster of his time", for whom Ireland was "translated to be under the English

[74] "But the origins of that advice were mediated by the cultural pressures surrounding their articulation, and the applications of the advice could be far from liberatory. In effect, texts such as this one were important agents in providing still more injunctions on female behaviour, most of which supported the ideological work performed in male-authored tetxs." (Wayne 2000: 66).

government" (Grymeston, 1606: E4v-E5r)[75]: there are obviously clear hints of a political discourse here, which points to lust and degeneration having made it necessary for Ireland to fall under the dominion of England. Sardanapalus is also mentioned a quintessential personification of lust, having also led to the loss of his empire, Babylon –in fact, it was Assyria: but this is an obviously mythical, non-historical reference-. But then there is a curious turn in her discourse. She roots her explanation in the historical context of the Gospels, where "we read that those who were taken in this sinne, were stoned to death" (Grymeston, 1606: E5r). But in the last of the canonical Gospels, Jesus famously refused to stone a woman who had committed adultery (John 8: 1-59), shaming her public accusers and addressing to her the words "Go, woman, and sin no more". Grymeston interrupts the flow of her discourse in order to specify how that biblical text should be read, and carefully demarcates the extent of the tolerance that is contained in it. She states that many sinners seem to rely on this attitude of Jesus, thinking that they would be forgotten too…but they are wrong, since Jesus in this passage rejects the act of judgement, not the sin of adultery in itself: he "neither gives allowance to the sinne, nor discountenance the punishment" (Grymeston, 1606: E5r). Neither historical context nor fashion can justify acts of lust, even though a quick or thoughtless reading of Scripture might suggest so at certain moments: "there is not any vice more hatefull to man and odious to God" (Grymeston, 1606: E4r).

Very interestingly, Grymeston specifically mentions rape as a sin: "Many of our swaggering youth, that dry their bones with chamber worke, are growne to think Lecherie no vice, nor Rape no sinne (…) (Grymeston, 1606: E4r). This use of the term "rape" is no mere verbal coincidence; it certainly referred to physical abuse, and was used routinely in literary texts and in reference to well-known mythical or classical situations, such as the rape of Lucrece. The legal term that had been used during the medieval period for this action was the Latin one, "raptus", which roughly corresponded to "abduction" or "seizure" within the legal system brought to England by the Normans (Catty, 1999: 13). But in the sixteenth century the legal term was redefined in the statutes of 1555 and 1597 in terms that were closer to our own understanding of the word, a fact which, according to Jocelyn Catty, "shows the emergence of the legal definition of rape as a crime against the person" (Catty, 1999: 13). This legal modification signals a important change in

[75] Grymeston is referring in here to the last of the Irish monarchs, under whose reign Ireland fell into the hands of the Normans. This king finished his days in a monastery, and perhaps Grymeston blames the loss of his kingdom to his unsatiable lust. He was originally called *Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair*. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, "Roderic O'Connor". https://www.britannica.com/biography/Roderic-OConnor. Accessed on May 11th, 2024.

the cultural and institutional context of the English Renaissance, and it leaves its mark in the text of the *Miscellanea*. Once more in Grymeston, the reality of the body is thematically linked to the argument she is making; for her, rape is considered as an evil act performed on the body of another person, and it leaves a scar in the soul which is more resistant and permanent that physical ones.

This insistence on bodily sensations becomes apparent once more when Grymeston, discussing the correct attitude facing lust, gives the example of a saint (although Grymeston does not explicitly unveils the name of the saint, it is probably Saint Ambrose, named at the beginning of this chapter XIV, E4r, or perhaps, Saint Benedict, cited later on the same page) who placed his finger in a burning candle as soon as he felt the pinch of lust. He concluded that, if his finger was so reluctant to be burnt, his soul would be much more reluctant to consume itself in the flames of hell. Grymeston finishes the chapter by once more reminding the reader (and especially her son Bernye) of the reality of death: "What it is to live as though we would not die!" (Grymeston, 1606: E7r). The dominating advice to her son given in chapter XIII is that lust and lechery are terrible vices; an advice that might easily remind us of the rejection of pleasure that Johann Huizinga identified so well as part of the culture of the late Middle Ages (Huizinga, 1954). This seems to suggest that the *Miscellanea* should perhaps be read not only in a specifically English context, but also as representing a wider European atmosphere that also finds an expression in its pages.

On the aspect of lust, therefore, Grymeston's perspective seems to be entirely coherent with the inheritance of late medieval Catholic discourse, without adding many innovations of her own –apart from the above-mentioned reference to rape-, but still filtering that discourse through her willingness to use humble bodily metaphors. The human tendency to feel desire may offer the justification for a traditional and moralistic advice, but it is still vividly rendered in her text as the sensation of burning our fingers with a candle.

2.11 Repentance

Chapter XV offers a meditation on the significance of repentance; in this chapter Grymeston reminds us (again) of the importance of living being aware of death: "how detestable it is to live as though would not die", or "Dispose thy selfe to death, since thou must not live" (Grymeston, 1606: E7v). These sentences must be read once more within the pattern both of the traditions of the *Memento mori* and the *Ars moriendi*; they are part of the configuration of the intended reader/son as

a subject that is permanently ready for death. The idea of a repentant self here, however, clearly preserves some remnants of the form that it had adopted before the Reformation.

To begin with, the possibility of last-minute confession and absolution had been firmly denied by the Reformers; institutionally, this had brought about a loss of institutional significance, within the Church of England, of the last-minute rites. The function of the pastors was now seen as not determining for the final good of the soul (though of course the function of the clergy was still important socially, offering consolation and company to the dying). For a Catholic like Grymeston, who had preserved the old faith, this involved retaining both the beliefs in the possibility of last-minute salvation and the theological discourses that preserved this option. While she certainly does not build the notion of repentance on this sole basis, she does not ignore it, and therefore enters here into a sense of necessary distance from, and even polemical opposition to, the dominant Protestant discourse.

The concept of spiritual "probability", which had been completely excluded from the Protestant discourse, is used by Grymeston, even though it is introduced to point out its insignificance when it is applied to the life of the soul, or the unlikeliness of applying it to divine grace: "With what *probability* can you expect that grace in a moment at your death, that has not befallen you in all your lifetime?" (Grymeston, 1606: E8v). The notion of reconciliation is also used in the text with a full sense of moving from a state of sinfulness into one of grace, thus accepting the possibility of returning to the fold of God within the scope of this life; the notion is used, therefore, with the full acceptance of the validity of the sinner's gesture towards God. As she states when addressing women: "Either art thou the spouse of Christ, or the adulteresse of the divell (…) Reconcile thyselfe to God before he come to judgement, behold he comes and comes quickly" (Grymeston, chapter XV, emphasis mine). This idea of judgement is always present in Grymeston, qualifying the idea of a reconciliation with God, and it seems to be another of the aspects of her writing that inherit part of the medieval tradition. According to Philippe Aries, the presence of the Judgement in Catholic iconography had intensified from the twelfth century onwards: the image of the weighing of souls was often carried out in the pictorial tradition by the archangel Saint Michael, who determined to what an extent good or bad deeds had framed the soul of the dying. The intercession of the Virgin and Saint John was also popular in that tradition, which conveyed the feelings of the late medieval population (Ariès, 1981: 39-43). Grymeston is far from being so dependent on visual imagery; her writing,

as are seeing, concerns the individual rather than the general human destiny, but her use of the concept of judgement as something that seems to follow the death of the individual, rather than being pre-established or eternally fixed, remains quite strong in her work.

After several mentions to characters as diverse as Saladin and Solomon, Grymeston goes on to make an open praise of repentance where, as could be expected, we can occasionally glimpse some implicit criticism of basic Protestant doctrine, in the specific wording that she uses. She openly asserts that God is capable of actively forgiving all sorts of sins: "He that denies that he will forgive us our sins, denies His *omnipotence*" (Grymeston, 1606: F2v). The denial of omnipotence had been a recurring feature of anti- Catholic propaganda on the protestant side: it was assumed that the traditional doctrine of confession and extreme unction was itself a denial of divine power, since it seemed to imply that humans could, of their own will, correct or modify divine judgement; hence, it was God's own unconquerable and all-powerful will that was usually asserted by the reformers. But here it is precisely the act of forgiveness that reflects God's absolute power, without there being any sense of opposition between both concepts. As further examples of repentance in the Bible, Grymeston refers to Peter, Mary Magdalen, David, Zacheus and Ezechias; her final advice in this chapter for her son is: "Repent with Ezechias, and turne the blessing of life unto thee" (Grymeston, 1606: F3v). The repentant attitude that she hopes her son will acquire will therefore make him, as well, the ideal candidate for receiving a life-giving blessing [76].

2.12 Obedience and the Defence of Princes

At this point, in the final chapters of the book, we move on towards a more openly political discourse[77]. We will now observe how all the previous aspects begin to come together in a clearer discourse on how the subject in formation (the young

[76] We may add the interesting possibility, pointed out by some scholars, that the poem *Saint Peter's Complaint* by Robert Southwell, published in 1595, might have influenced Grymeston's views on repentance. Curiously enough, Southwell's poem was very popular among protestants in England, having undergone thirteen editions by 1634; Jillian Snyder suggests that it offered ways of blending the two dominant religious ideologies in England. It is quite probable, since we know that Grymeston followed and admired Robert Southwell, that there was some influence of his poem in her book of advice (see. Snyder 2020: 313-36). The poem is online : https://www.poetrynook.com/poem/saint-peters-complaint. Accessed 18 May 2024.

[77] Let us remember that the final six chapters were added in the 1604 second edition, and that there is a possibility that they might not have been written (as a whole, or in fragments) by Grymeston herself. But I am considering them here as directly authored by her, on the grounds that no clear textual proof or evidence has yet been offered against this assumption. I am following the lead of Megan Matchstinke in this (Matchstinke 2009: 47).

Bernie) can come to be attentive as well to the world around him. It is here as well that we can trace the harmony between her private Catholic positions and a general obedience to princes that is recommended to her son.

The title for chapter XVI is "That Maiestie is the daughter of Honour and Reverence, against Traitors." It is a discourse supporting the obedience to princes: "We are to obey Princes (being fingers of the great hand that governs the world) not for fear, but for conscience's sake" (Grymeston, 1606: F4r). Very briefly, but very bluntly, Grymeston shows which side she was publicly on; the side of the king over that of the parliament. Besides, obedience, as William Gouge (1622) or Thomas Tusser (1574) had already written, was a common virtue of all good wives and women; it seems clear, then, that their public behavior must be oriented towards it. Again, Grymeston is not only supporting the mainstream trends on womanhood, but extending them towards the recommended behavior that must guide her son.

It is interesting to see how Grymeston returns here to favourite theme, the sins of the flesh: "Princes are the Gods of the Earth, their hearts in Gods hands, if inclined to good: dispensers of His mercies, if given to cruelty, executioners of His judgements, by which *foot* you may guesse what a *body* of sin Treason is" (Grymeston, 1606: F5r). And this links in with a wider discourse, and a complete and coherent perspective on the human beings: the perception that human beings are in themselves sinful, having in themselves the inevitable tendency to err and fail. This is a perception that is common to Catholics and Protestants, and is in fact at the heart of Christianity in the seventeenth century, both in the continent and in England. This has of course a biblical basis: human beings, as sons of Adam, have a natural predisposition towards evil. The section continues: the traitors believe that there have been rulers who have "governed with tyrannie as it was a disgrace to their persons…and their persons have stained to the place they sustained…But little he knows that doth not acknowledge that it doth not derogate from the Sonne, to be hated of the Owle: nor detract from the dignitie of Princes" (Grymeston, 1606: F4r). This reference to the owl might be an antisemitic commentary (owls represented the Jews in the medieval tradition of bestiaries), or it might simply be a general reference to the forces of evil and the creatures of the night, since these birds were often associated with witchcraft. Either way, the continued dignities of princes covers both fathers and sons, kings as well as princes. Therefore one should be faithful to Charles I, as well as previously to James I. There is no denying the explicitly loyalist claim that Grymeston; even as she seems to advocate the domestic practice of Catholicism, she still urges her son towards avoiding support to rebels,

even when the kings may be wrong in their actions ("when their persons have stained the place they sustained") (Grymeston, 1606: F3v-F4r).

So it seems that Bernie is at the same warned against any form of impulsive rebellion, and asked to remain, nevertheless, alert against the excesses of princes. There was sufficient ground in the behaviour of the Stuarts to justify such prevention: this had been strong taxing against Catholics during the first part pf the century. As Megan Matchstinke has observed, "Recusancy fines proed a steady source of revenue that James I could hardly afford to give up. Persecuted middling-class Catholics paid fees, forfeited property rights,and remained outside of the competition for key appointments in law, medicine, military service and public office as a result of their disobedience." (Matchstinke, 2002: 61). On the one hand, an open or uncloseted Catholicism had to be avoided, but on the other hand the old belief had to remain on the private sphere, and it was always necessary for the child to remember the extreme weakness to which Princes were exposed. Therefore, if Bernie had to become a conscious and aware individual, he needed to take into account both sides of the balance. It is as if his mother was saying to him: be a good believer, but remember the absolute fallibility that princes have; never act as a traitor to a king, but always remember that they take wrong decisions. After all, they are all inheritors of Adam, and hence fully capable of sinfulness.

Chapter XVI offers an extended allegory that is very indicative of Grymeston's beliefs. This clarifies the nature of martyrs that are, at the same time, representants of true belief and exemplary characters in times of political trouble. Let us analize it in detail:

> The silk-worme first eateth her selfe out of a very Little seed, and groweth to be a small worme. Afterwarde when by feeding acertainn tieupon frech and greene leaves is waxed of grater size eateth itself againe out of the outer coeate, and worketh itselfe into a case of silke which when it hath once finished, in the end casteth the seed for many Young to breed of, and leaving the silke for a man's ornament, dyed all White and winged in theshape of a flying thing (Grymeston, 1606: F4v).

This is one of the moments in which Grymestone makes the most of the many poetic narratives and allegories she had collected and used all though the *Miscellanea*. The silk is lke the good christian (in her family traditon, the catholic); initially, it begins by eating the "greene leaves" of prayers and charity, in a second moment, having overgrown its external skin, eats from it, leaving her final and beautiful body to serve as food for the many Young that come after it. So

Grymestone is not calling for a open and spectacular martyrdom, as took place under the empires of Nero or of Julian the Apostate, but she is reccomending for a life full of good example and good private practice, independent of external events or situations, in which the believer (the good Catholic, in her case) will, in the end, leave his or her own memory (and one may also understnd, perhaps his or her own sanctified body) as the best spiritual food that his or her descendants may have. Whatever doctrinal and political changes may come, this example will still be valid: in this way, Bernie may go through all the government crisis that may come, while still clinging to a model of martyrdom that is based on giving a good, self-annihilating example with one's own life, rather than offering that life spectacularly in public. That was the way for Catholics to progress discreetly in their own faith, while living in an adverse political context.

2.13 The Role of Justice and the First Murder

At this point it may be useful to evoke, once again, the poem by Edmund Spenser that Grymeston had quoted in chapter VI. Now it is possible for us to read it from another perspective, more political and less spiritual, having to do with the specific acts of mercy and of justice that the kings of England had brought about in their reigns. Spenser was referring in his original text to the acts of mercy performed by Elizabeth I on her political enemies (some of whom were Catholics); but once removed from its original context and put in the book that Grymeston is writing, as one more of her examples, this text can perhaps be easily seen as speaking about the mercy and justice of James I:

> O who shall show the countenance and gestures
> Of mercy and justice? Which faire sacred sisters
> With equal poize do euer ballance euen,
> Th'vnchanging proiects of the king of heauen. (…)
> Th'one beares the sword of vengeance vnrelenting,
> Th'other kings pardon, for the true repenting.
> (Grymestone, 1606: C1r)

May we have come upon an implicit criticism for the justice of the King in his response to the Gunpowder plot? This might well be the case, if we take into account Grymeston's peronal position. Now it might even seem that, even as the "king of heauen" 's sense of justice is unchanging, that of the material (English) king is too often arbitrary or too often unjust; Grymstone may be suggesting that the earthly justice has been lacking in mercy here. This implication is not removed

from the general intention of the quote, but whether it accentuated Bernie's awareness of the king's injustice or of his righteousness, would depend very much on the moment in which it was read or re-read.

Ambiguities of this kind become more pronounced as we advance toward the final part of the book, and they lead us to come back and see some of her earlier writings or quotations as playing, perhaps, with the times or the situations in which they will be read. Many of the earlier texts can have several readings, and they can be take up again under a darker of deeper interpretation, which may correspond to Bernye's intelligence, and his learning to attach different meanings to different historical moments.

This has, no doubt, its basis on belief in human fallibility, which is equally Protestant and Catholic, and projects a strong doubt of suspicion over all forms of political attitudes. We have already established that Bernie, as a subject of the king in formation, is to be firmly behind the king, but also to take into account a slightly complex view: that humans with good ideals may also be tricked by the devil, just as rebels may be people whose head has been confused by the simple fact that occasionally the kings' "persons have stained the place they sustained" (Grymeston, 1606: Frv-F4r). But sin transforms every beautiful thing into something hideous and horrendous. Even Satan was more beautiful than we, yet he was once hideously transformed by sins ("The devil by creation was more beautiful than we" (Grymeston, 1606: B7r). All this confusion and misery, and repetition of crimes throughout our history stems from "the sinne of Caine" (Grymeston, 1606: F5r), whose dreadful and political inheritance is addressed finally in Chapter XVII ("Of Wilfull Murder").

Murder was "the sinne of Caine", Grymeston explains, in the same way that treason had been the sin of Adam, who thought that by eating an "apple" he was going to be wiser than God (it is remarkable that the sin of the apple, in this case, is not attributed by Grymeston to Eve, but to Adam). As chapter XVII states:

> For if we respect the Maiestie of God himself, what can be more odious unto him, than to see his own image defaced in his owne presence, or what can be more contemptuous, than to destroy one in his view, that is so dear unto him, as he has numbered the hairs of his head, and suffers not a sparrow to fall on the ground before him, without his providence (Grymeston, 1606: F5r).

Murder is against the creation of God. It was terrible for two reasons; because it was an act against God's will, and because the dying sufferer was not given the chance to prepare for a good death (which we have already explored in previous

chapters). There is a third terrible reason: murders always claim for revenge, so that destroying someone's life will lead again to another death, multiplying sinfulness steadily: "For the very blood that issues out of the wounds of the murdered, calls to heaven for vengeance" (Grymeston, 1606: F6r). This explanation in itself be sufficient to explain the political life of England since the Reformation. It would seem, then, that political story has put the Catholics in a situation of disadvantage after political upheavals over which they had no control, and which have implied an institutional history full of murders. The whole tract seems to recommend prudence and forbearance of adversity, which in fact will be the best advice for a young man who will love under a potentially hostile religious structure.

There is a final element that stands in chapter XVII as important, given the history of Catholicism in Britain, and that is the role of judges and magistrates in demanding an oath. Let us remember that the Oath of Allegiance to the crown was often demanded of Catholics who went into public service, and it was a bone of contention among them whether they should swear it or not. Giving a lie or swearing falsely would imply a falsity. But even here Grymeston seems to be practical, thinking of her son's own needs.

> A Magistrate is thought to be Gods deputee heare on earth, yet is hee no to search the corners of the heart, he must judge *secundum allegata et probata*: as things appear to him, so must he deeme them. The means he hath so searche the truth, is by oath, which is *Vinculum anima* , a course warranted by Abraham's example, 24 *Genesis* (…) (Grymeston, 1606: F5v).

The judges, therefore, are under the obligation to be the deputees of God, just and merciful (which they have not always been in the case of the Catholics in England), and pronouncing themselves only in things that are proved beyond any doubt. The oath that they demand is therefore sacred, and must be spoken according to the *vinculum anima*. So there is a responsibility on both sides: Elizabeth Grymeston once more encourages Bernye to act according to both his conscience and the law, and not to engage in unprofitable rebellion. But at the same time he reminds him of the fact that justice needs to be fair in order to be justice at all. Bernye was thus given by his mother an education (in the form of her writings) that, taking full historical advantage of the failures and troubles of Catholicism in England, would enable him to remain entirely faithful to the crown, while remaining privately faithful to his own beliefs.

Taken together, then, the political messages of Grymeston's Book may initially appear to be blurred. It is sometimes not immediately clear exactly what she wants her son Bernye to be: a good subject of the king or a good Catholic. The tendency to equivocate, which had become common among Catholics after the gunpowder plot, may seem here to predominate, since the biblical messages that she communicates were far from transparent and, in either case, could be equally well accepted by Catholics as well as protestants. They could equally be part of a Catholic or a Protestant book, and contribute to the formation of a dutiful subject on both sides of the religious divide, even though the religious subjects she concentrates upon show every where the traces of her religious conviction.

There is, I think, a possible explanation for this. The seeming ambiguity of the text might be seen in fact as a sign of the times, and as possibly offering proof that the book is written in a situation of political crisis. While several of the secular topics (murder, magistracy, obedience to princes, etc.) lend themselves easily to a pro-Catholic interpretation, they do not do it too easily; a shadow of ambiguity remains always over them. Knowing the religious pages of this tract and comparing them to the political parts, it is obvious that Grymeston has had an extra measure of care in projecting any political messages too explicitly.

But that is precisely what I find interesting and significative. That Grymeston seems to suggest, to point even in the direction of Catholicism as corresponds to her inner beliefs, but that she never openly enters into the field of open propaganda, and that she should be able to move bewtween two discourses that were so different in their implications. Bernye was meant to be a good servant of the King, and at the same time he as means to be a good Cahtolic; the only problem is that both things were almost incompatible at the time. The *Miscellanea* is proof of that great incompatibility.

2.14 Conclusion

To what an extent, therefore, does Elizabeth Grymeston's *Miscellanea* offer a valid contribution to a possible history of motherhood? What are its most relevant aspects in that respect, and how are they expressed?

To begin with, the humanistic tendencies (typical of the late Renaissance) towards quotation and borrowing from different authors is very vividly present in the *Miscellanea*; but, at the same time, it is clear that the overall aim of the text is not to generate a sense of scholarship or of intellectual refinement, but simply to further a spiritual and moral education in values for the young addressee, Bernye.

Quotation after quotation or reference after reference, as we have seen, Grymeston keeps on building her discourse for her son with what she calls a "broken stile"; her own voice is built by the many images she keeps borrowing from others. But this does not seem to diminish or erase the personal perspective of the author; on the contrary, her emphases and her intentions materialize themselves constantly through this intertextual network. A motherly literary personality is created through impersonality.

The two main topics which are linked constantly here are motherhood and death. They cannot be easily distinguished from each other, since motherhood involves a spiritual projection towards another who was originated in one 's own body (here, young Bernye) and at the same time it is an experience of suffering. As we have seen, many of the most well-developed metaphors in the book focus precisely on the experience of the body; Grymeston is, if anything, an author that is deeply conscious of her own body and of the experience of the senses. For her, the very experience of living is one of suffering, and true wisdom leads to an understanding of this simple fact. The basis of Christendom is essentially, for Grymeston, a learning process of suffering, and she wishes Bernye to become a excellent pupil in that area.

Suffering and the rejection of pleasure, apparently as an early modern updating of old medieval perspectives, are constantly present in the *Miscellanea*, but they are never in contradiction or tension with the love that Grymeston evidently feels for her son. On the contrary, these two subjects seem to be strengthened by the very subject of motherhood, emboldened by it. And here Grymeston touched a theme that must have been inevitably familiar to the mothers of the seventeenth century: the reality and physicality of death, that must be accepted and integrated in the life of the individual. Nothing was more tragic, but also more common, than death itself: the text not only mirrors that reality, but builds its ethical discourse around it. Bernye is expected to become a virtuous individual to the extent that he will become aware of death and fully conscious of it; only that awareness will validate his acts.

And finally, we have to consider the biographical fact of her Catholicism. In the final perspective, the concepts of martyrdom understood as a personal and individual offering (rather than as a spectacular sacrifice), of loyalty to the king and to existing power structures, seem to act like a protection given to Bernye under the form of political theory. They not only point towards how he should behave as a citizen, but they can potentially be read (if the reader wishes to do it) as instructions for all Catholics living under an adverse political regime. And I

underline here that they can be read in that way, certainly, but in any case they do not enter into any direct contradiction or polemics with Protestant doctrine. Grymeston moves between these polemical points, without ever entering into an open conflict; she (and perhaps also her editors, the overseers of the second and later editions) is very aware of the consequences of the Gunpowder plot and its aftermath.

As we have seen in the final part of this chapter, there may be equivocation in the texts of the *Miscellanea* (linked to actual cases of recusancy and pro-Catholic politics). But in the final analysis of the whole text, this is certainly secondary. The most important aspect of this text is its wise and expressive dramatization of the projection from a mother to a son, and the creation of a whole ethical and spiritual discourse addressed to him. All the diverse and varied forms of knowledge that she had inherited from the previous tradition in the forms of religious topics, historical references or fragments of poetry (protestant or Catholic) was put by her to the service of this dominant idea. Elizabeth Grymeston stands as a uniquely powerful voice of her time precisely because she appears before us, first and foremost, as a mother.

Chapter 3

Elizabeth Joscelin: Mothering from the Grave

3.1 Introduction

Motherhood could be performed from beyond the grave. Such was the case of Elizabeth Joscelin (1596–1622), who, during pregnancy, experienced a premonition of death and felt the urgent need to purchase a winding sheet and to leave behind an educational book for her unborn child. Tragically, her premonition proved true: she died nine days after giving birth to a baby girl, Theodora, on October 12, 1622 (Brown, 1999: 91).

Her book is divided into thirteen chapters, preceded by a preliminary letter addressed to her husband. The persistent allusions to her impending death are deeply moving; in a metaphorical twist, punctuation is sparingly used, as though she were racing against time to finish her task. In fact, she was never able to complete it—chapter thirteen remains unfinished.

What makes her legacy particularly compelling today is precisely this unique instance of "mothering from the grave." Unlike the other texts studied here—such as those of Elizabeth Grymeston, or Elizabeth Walker—Joscelin's work is addressed not to a grown or nearly grown child, but to an unborn one. The combination of pregnancy and the conscious preparation for death imbues the text with a rare emotional intensity. In addition, Joscelin sets forth an ideal Christian life: not only in terms of prayer, but also through a detailed articulation of proper behaviour and thought. The result is a practical guide for the child she would never see. Biblical quotations, mainly from the Geneva Bible, abound —many of them drawn from memory. Although she occasionally cites classical authors (such as Virgil's *Aeneid*), such references are rare. Overall, hers is a sorrowful yet profoundly affecting work, offering a vivid snapshot of an ideal early seventeenth-century motherly education.

This chapter is organized into three main sections. It begins with a biographical sketch, followed by a discussion of the 1622 manuscript and the 1624 edition

prepared by Thomas Goad (1576–1638), both held at the British Library. The analysis of her legacy is structured into three parts. The first examines her letter to her husband, a tender and emotionally resonant text. The second provides a detailed account of her instructions on how to spend the day—a kind of moral and practical itinerary for her child. The final section addresses chapters eleven, twelve, and the unfinished thirteenth chapter, which expand into broader reflections on moral values, drawing from the Ten Commandments, popular sayings, and other authors.

While reading, I occasionally wondered whether she had intended to write one section for each hour of the waking day, as if her work were conceived as a kind of "Book of Hours" for her child. This possibility will be explored as a hypothesis concerning Joscelin's intended structure.

The primary source for this chapter is Sylvia Brown's 1999 edition—an excellent annotated transcription of the original manuscript (Brown, 1999). Joscelin's work has also been discussed by leading historians such as Mary Prior (1985), Elaine V. Beilin (1987), Randall Martin (1997), Patricia Crawford (1998), Marsha Urban (2006), Betty Travtitsky (2001) and Felicity Dunworth (2010). Special mention must be made of Elizabeth Cramond and Susan Staub's compilation (2017). However, perhaps the most significant contribution is that of Jean LeDrew Metcalfe (2000), whose edition of the text combines the original manuscript with a comprehensive study of its reception in England, the publication history, and a compilation of various introductions to *The Mother's Legacy* written from the nineteenth century onwards. Her work is yet another testament to the enduring interest of the poignant and dramatic story of Elizabeth Joscelin.

3.2 Biography

Joscelin's childhood was not a happy one, according to several sources.[78] She was born in 1596, the only child of Richard Brooke (c.1572–1632) and Joan Chaderton (1574–1601) of Cheshire.[79] Her father, Richard Brooke, was the eldest son of Thomas Brooke, a squire of Norton in Cheshire. Elizabeth remained their only child—a fact that may be coincidental, but is notable given that she herself would

[78] Sylvia Brown relies on Sir Peter Leycester's studies on the county of Cheshire, that mention the separation of her parents, whereas Le Drew Metcalfe states that Thomas Goad (the editor of the printed version of 1624) never mentioned any disagreement or break- up among them.
[79] According to the edition of Sylvia Brown (1999), Joscelin's mother was called Elizabeth, but in Le Drew Metcalfe (2000) she is called Joan (p. 16).

later give birth to only one child as well. The family resided in Norton, in the Bucklow Hundred.[80]

The Bishop of Chester at the time—based in the county's principal city—was William Chaderton (c.1540–1608), father of Elizabeth's mother, Joan. Chaderton, Joscelin's maternal grandfather, was a zealous enforcer of religious conformity (see Brown, 199: 93), pursuing both Catholics and Puritans within his diocese. He also served as Master of Queens' College, Cambridge, and held a professorship in divinity.[81] As such, he was an Anglican cleric of notable education and authority, and would come to play a significant role in his granddaughter's upbringing.

Only three years after Elizabeth's birth, her father was absent from the household, having gone to Ireland, where he was knighted by the Earl of Essex. The couple appears to have separated, as suggested by Sir Peter Leycester's seventeenth-century account of Cheshire families.[82] In his *Historical Antiquities* (1687), Leycester also records that Elizabeth was raised in her grandfather Chaderton's household. However, some form of contact seems to have been maintained between father and daughter in later years. In her legacy, Elizabeth recommends to her husband that, in the event of her death, and should their child be a daughter, she might be entrusted to the care of her father, Richard Brooke, and his second wife, Katharine Nevell.

In April 1595, Chaderton was elected Bishop of Lincoln. The family subsequently moved from Norton to Southoe, one year before Elizabeth's birth. Southoe became Joscelin's family home and the place where she received her education. Tragically, it was also the setting of early loss: her mother died when Elizabeth was only six years old. According to Thomas Goad (1576–1638),[83] Joscelin's editor and friend, the young girl witnessed her mother's death—a traumatic event that left a profound impression on her. On her deathbed, Joan

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[80] A hundred was the historic division (the roots for which can be traced back to the twelfth century) of some counties and territories in England. Cheshire, in the northwest of England, was one of the counties divided this way. For more information, see William Mortimer (1847: iii and iv).

[81] See Perdita Warwick work on the manuscripts of the British Library; https://perdita.warwick.ac.uk/ms_BLA27467.htm. Accessed on 12th May 2025.

[82] "Through some dislike after marriage, Sir Richard and his wife lived asunder". Leycester, Peter: *Historical Antiquities of Cheshire.* 1673. Cited in Brown, 1999: 93 and 103. Also, the genealogical traces of people from Cheshire and Leycester's writings are all recorded in the archives of Cheshire; https://catalogue.cheshirearchives.org.uk/records/DLT. Accessed on 13th May 2025.

[82] "If it bee a daughter I hope my mother Brooke if thou desirest her will take it amonge hers." Joscelin, Elizabeth. *A Mother's Legacy to her unborn child*. 1622. Introductory letter to her husband. [fol. 3r]. BL MS 27467. The complete name of the second wife Katherine is in Metcalfe, 2000: 4.

[83] Thomas Goad was most known for having been appointed by James I to attend the synod of Dort in 1619. Other writings of his own include *The Dolefull Even-Song* (London:1623). See Feroli, 1994: 100.

Chaderton is said to have urged her daughter to show strict obedience and reverence to both her father and grandfather, suggesting that some cordial relationship had been re-established with her estranged husband. For the six-year-old Elizabeth, witnessing this final farewell—and hearing these last admonitions—may well have inspired her own desire to leave a similar legacy when she sensed that her own death was near:

> In the prosecution of the duty of obedience unto parents, I view the deep impression, long since, when she was not above six years old, made in her mind by the last words of her own mother, charging her upon her blessing, to show all obedience and reverence to her father (sir Richard Brooke) and to her reverend grandfather (Brown, 1999: 93).

Much of what we know about Elizabeth Joscelin's life comes from Thomas Goad's *Approbation*, which introduces her text in the first edition of 1624. There are, however, additional sources that shed light on her life—most notably the biographical and ecclesiastical records concerning her maternal grandfather, William Chaderton.[84]

According to Goad, Joscelin's life in Southoe after her mother's death was devoted to study and work, under the close supervision of her grandfather Chaderton. Her education, by all accounts, was exceptional.

> She was from her tender yeers carefully nurtured, as in those accomplishments of knowledge in Languages, History and some Arts, so principally in studies of piety (Goad, 1624: ix).

However, Goud is somehow surprised when he discovers that, in her *Legacie*, there is almost nothing of the secular education that Joscelin received in her youth:

> In the whole course of her pen, I observe her Piety and Humility; these her lines scarce shewing one sparke of the elementary fire of her secular learning: this her candle being rather lighted from the lamp of the Sanctuary (Goad, 1624: xi).

It is true that there is only one reference in the entire book to the classical world. Yet this reference is not incidental, as we shall see. Joscelin explicitly rejects the fate of Creusa, Aeneas's wife, who, in the tragedy of Troy, appears to her husband—who is desperately searching for her—as a ghost, forever lost. We will return to this reference later in this chapter.

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[84] Goud, Thomas: *Approbation*, in the preface to Joscelin's work (London: 1724, ix-x).

Thomas Goad notes that Joscelin spent her final years devoted to the study of divinity. This may explain why *The Legacy* is fundamentally religious in nature, grounded in biblical texts—primarily drawn from the Geneva Bible.

> The later years of her life she addicted to no other studies than Divinity, where of some imperfect notes remain, but principally this small treatise, found in her desk unfinished (Goad, 1624: xiv).[85]

But in the previous years, she had studied all sorts of disciplines:

> Besides the domestic cares pertaining to a wife, the former part pf those years were employed by her in the studies of Morality and History, the better by the help of foreign languages, not without a taste and faculty in Poetry (Goad, 1624: xi-xii).

Elizabeth's early education did not differ significantly from that which a young man of her time might have received. Given that her grandfather was none other than the Regius Professor of Divinity at Cambridge and President of Queens' College, she could not have had a more learned tutor (if she had any other tutor, it remains unknown). The traditional curriculum—the so-called *liberal arts*—comprised grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. Elizabeth was also proficient in Latin, as Thomas Goad recounts her ability to recite up to forty lines of Latin, as well as English poetry (Brown, 1999: 93). This will later contrast with her expressed uncertainties about what should be taught to her own child, should it be a daughter—an issue we will explore within her text.

If the death of her mother was a traumatic experience at the age of six, the loss of her grandfather may have been even more devastating. William Chaderton, the wise and learned man who had overseen her education, died suddenly in the spring of 1608. According to Sylvia Brown, it remains unclear where Elizabeth spent the subsequent eight years, between her grandfather's death and her marriage to Taurell Joscelin in 1616. It is suggested that she lived with her father, Sir Richard Brooke, by then Lord of the Manor in Norton (Brown, 1999: 96). The *Legacy* implies that she was on good terms with him, which makes this scenario plausible. By that time, he had remarried—his second wife, Katherine Nevell, who bore him fourteen children[86].

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[85] It is a pity that the other papers did not survive...or have not been found yet.

[86] According to the expectations of the period, then, it was a successful marriage. See Metcalfe, 2000: 4.

Elizabeth Joscelin, however, stood apart. As the sole heir of her maternal grandfather, who left no male descendants, she inherited significant lands. This inheritance made her a "marriageable" woman. At the age of twenty, she married Taurell Joscelin (Brown, 1999: 93) (1590–1656), son and heir of Sir Thomas Joscelin of Willingale, Essex. While Taurell's exact birth year is uncertain, his admission as a fellow commoner at Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1606 suggests he was six or seven years older than Elizabeth (Brown, 1999: 96).

The letter that opens *The Legacy* reveals that their marriage was an affectionate one—a "companionate marriage" (Metcalfe, 2000: 8). However, the couple remained childless for the first six years. Then, according to Goad's *Approbation*, when she "felt her selfe quicke with childe (…) she secretly took order for the buying of a new winding sheet (…)" (Goad, 1624: xvi). At the same time, she began to write down her legacy, knowing there might be no other opportunity to bequeath moral guidance to her child.

Joscelin's book is unique. While works such as Elizabeth Grymeston's *Miscelanea* (1604) and Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing* (1616) had already paved the way for maternal advice literature, *The Legacy* is the only one written for an unborn child—someone who did not yet exist. In this sense, she embarked on a singular journey: her experience of motherhood was transformed into a book. The physical presence of a manuscript would substitute for the presence of a mother. Joscelin would speak from beyond the grave—not just to a future daughter named Theodora, but to all of us.

3.3 The Manuscript and the Edition of 1624

There are two manuscripts of *The Mother's Legacy* housed in the British Library, both dated 1622. In her edition of the text, Sylvia Brown mentions only one—Additional Manuscript 27,467 (Brown, 1999: 100). However, in the edition introduced by Le Drew Metcalfe, the editor refers to two manuscripts. The first lacks Thomas Goad's introduction, as it was written entirely by Elizabeth Joscelin herself. The second, Additional Manuscript 4378, is Goad's own version of the text. This discrepancy may stem from the existence of two different catalogue entries for Joscelin's work: one under "Eliza Joscelin" (27, 467) and the other under "Elizabeth Jocelin" (4378). (Metcalfe, 2000: 17-19)

The author's name appears with various spellings in different editions. Following Le Drew Metcalfe, (Metcalfe, 2000: 17-19) I use "Joscelin," which corresponds to the spelling found in the author's only known signature. Therefore,

this thesis adopts "Joscelin" throughout. With the exception of the substantial studies by Brown and Metcalfe, general approaches tend to prefer more traditional spellings: "Joceline" is used by Prior, (Prior, 1985: 214, 222) as well as by Crawford and Mendelson (1998: 152 and 196), while "Jocelin" appears in works by Randall Martin (1997: 34-36) and Beilin (1987: 271-75).

Turning to the manuscripts and the 1624 printed edition: Joscelin's manuscript is currently bound in a modern *octavo* volume,[87] although Brown describes it as a duodecimo. Both editions agree that the blue velvet binding dates from the nineteenth century; the manuscript includes a letter to her husband (fols. 1–6) (Brown, 1999: 102), followed by three blank pages, after which the main work begins (fols. 7–44v). Six additional blank pages appear between fols. 8v and 9. The text is divided into thirteen chapters and written in italic hand, the most common handwriting style for the period, as noted in the section of this thesis dedicated to female correspondence. By contemporary, seventeenth-century standards, capitalization and punctuation are sparse. Variations in the size and consistency of the script suggest that the text was composed over multiple sittings. Toward the end, the handwriting becomes noticeably less uniform. As Randall Davidson observed in his 1894 introduction to *The Mother's Legacy*, the closing pages show "unmistakable signs of physical difficulty or distress." (Metcalfe, 2000: 19).[88]

Thomas Goad transcribed Joscelin's text in 1622 (Add. MS 4378) and, two years later, became its first editor. An Anglican clergyman educated at Eton, Cambridge, and Oxford, Goad was appointed by James I to replace the ailing Bishop Joseph Hall at the Synod of Dort in 1619—a story recounted by Thomas Fuller in his *Church History*.[89] Goad likely encountered William Chaderton around 1600, when Goad was ordained in Lincoln during Chaderton's episcopate.[90] It is

[87] For those who are unfamiliar with the term, an *octavo* volume refers to the way in which a piece of paper was folded (three times) to produce eight pages (sixteen in total if we take into consideration recto and verso). The size can vary but normally is about 6 × 9 inches (16 × 23 centimetres).

[88] The introduction by Randall Davidson is available on the page 131 of this same book.

[89] In 1648, Thomas Fuller, prebendary of Sarum, published the *Church History of Britain*. It was reprinted several times and can be consulted online here, in a publication of 1837; https://archive.org/details/churchhistoryofb01full/page/n5/mode/2up?view=theater. Accessed on 25th of May 2025Consulted on the 25th of May 2025.

[90] According to Sylvia Brown, he was ordained in 1606 (Brown 1999: 101). According to Metcalfe, in 1600 (2000: 20). In this case, I feel more inclined to the date that Sylvia Brown proposes, since it also appears that way in the Dictionary of National Biography, volume 22, by Gordon Goodwin. It says; "At Christmas 1606 he was ordained priest and commenced B.D. (Bachelor of Divinity) in 1607." https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Dictionary_of_National_Biography,_1885-1900/Goad,_Thomas_(1576-1638). Accessed on 25th May, 2025.

even possible that Goad's father and Joscelin's grandfather encountered each other briefly at Cambridge (Metcalfe, 1999: 20).

Goad's manuscript comprises fifty-one folios and is bound in a volume marked *E Biblioteca Birchiana*. It begins with Goad's approbation, followed by Joscelin's letter to her husband, Torrell Joscelin, and the main body of *The Mother's Legacy*. Goad does not preserve Joscelin's original errors; in fact, he removes all punctuation and paragraphing, expands her contractions, and regularizes spelling. According to Le Drew Metcalfe, Goad's manuscript is generally less reliable than Joscelin's autograph version (Metcalfe, 1999: 20).

Joscelin herself corrected her manuscript in several places, perhaps as a means of reinforcing the authority of her maternal voice.[91] For instance, she struck out the word *altogether* from the phrase, "will not be [altogether] unprofitable" (Brown, 1999: 100). Nevertheless, such emendations are rare: I would say that, without a doubt, more revealing are Goad's editorial interventions. He replaced Joscelin's commendation of the "learned woman" with the expression "honest woman"—likely, it was a strategic choice to avoid controversy (Brown, 1999: 20). In the 1684 edition, further editorial changes were made, including the substitution of Joscelin's recommended text (Henry Smith's *Prayers*) with the recommendation of the more institutionally sanctioned *Book of Common Prayer* (Brown, 1999: 100).

Finally, the book was entered into the Stationers' Register on January 12, 1624, with the author listed as "Ellen Joslin." It was reissued multiple times: in addition to the 1624 edition, further editions appeared in 1625, 1632, 1635, 1684, 1722, 1724, 1840, 1852, 1853, 1871, and 1894. Illustrated Dutch translations were published in 1699 and again in 1784. Three of the nineteenth-century editions included introductions written by Robert Lee, Sarah Hale, and Randall Davidson, and these prefaces have been preserved in the appendix to Le Drew Metcalfe's edition (Metcalfe, 2000: 23).

The original manuscript had no title, and it was Thomas Goad who selected the term *Legacy* for the printed work. Although Joscelin refers to her text as a "legacy" in the letter to her husband, she also describes it variously as meditations, a letter, instructions, or simply as a treatise. Goad's choice of title clearly resonated with readers and contributed to the work's popularity and influence. Texts such as Elizabeth Richardson's *A Ladies Legacie to her Daughters* (1645) and Susanna

[91] According to Sylvia Brown, her revisions "are traces of the process of writing, and often of choice and struggle, in Joscelin's attempt to voice authoritative maternal instruction" (Brown, 1999: 100).

Bell's *The Legacy of a Dying Mother* (1673) bear witness to the emergence of a recognizable and fashionable genre (Metcalfe, 2000: 23).

Le Drew Metcalfe's outstanding editorial work illuminates not only Joscelin's text but also the substantial differences between the original manuscript and the version published by Goad in 1624. These differences reveal, very obviously, a male editor's interventions in a female-authored text. In her edition, Metcalfe presents Joscelin's original manuscript on the *verso* and Goad's published version on the *recto*. In pages 24 and 25, she analyses Goad's editorial corrections as evidence of patriarchal authority overriding female authorship. While this line of inquiry is very compelling and suggestive, my own study focuses exclusively on the original manuscript, since my aim is to explore Joscelin's legacy specifically in her capacity as a mother.

3.4 Letter to a Beloved Husband

The Mother's Legacy opens with a letter from Elizabeth Joscelin to her husband, Taurell Jocelin: "To my truly loving and most Dearly loued husband Taurrell Jocelin."[92] In the nineteenth century, this letter was celebrated as a poignant testament to conjugal devotion. Yet Joscelin does more than profess love[93]—she also offers a justification for her writing, and expresses her fears, doubts, and hopes for the education of the child she carries.

From the outset, Joscelin entwines desire, anxiety, and maternal responsibility: "I no sooner conceyved a hope that I should bee made a mother by thee but with it entered the consideration of a mothers duty and shortly after followed the apprehension of danger that might preuent me for [from] executing that care I so exceedingly desired" (1–5, p. 46). She first experiences *hope*—perhaps even before actual conception. This may allude, subtly, to the six childless years of her marriage, in which hope preceded fulfilment. Now pregnant, she contemplates her maternal duty. Will she live to fulfil it? Dark premonitions intrude. Death may thwart her calling. And if so—what then? How could she leave so sacred a charge unattended?

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[92] For the reader's sake, I will follow in my citing the edition of Le Drew Metcalfe (2000), since it is divided in verses. So, the citing will be done in brackets, with the number of the verse and page in the Metcalfe edition.

[93] Robert Lee describes the letter as "so tender and touching that no human being who is not past feeling can read it without deep emotion." Edition of 1852. Cited in Le Drew Metcalfe, 2000: 124. As I stated above, the three introductions added to the book in the nineteenth century can be found in the Appendix in Le Drew Metcalfe's 2000 edition.

Death, then, is present from the very beginning. As Teresa Feroli argues, Joscelin's reflections on death are not merely circumstantial but existential; she suggests that Joscelin's attitude toward death borders on the suicidal. "In the very act of protesting her wish to live," writes Feroli, "Jocelin may more convincingly attest to her interest in death" (Feroli, 1994: 97). For Feroli, maternity threatens Joscelin's sense of self; although she greets it with joy, she also approaches it with fear and detachment. I would argue, however, that these complex emotions converge into a singular imperative: her maternal duty must be fulfilled. Writing—committing herself to paper—becomes the means by which she may achieve this.

Returning to the letter, we see that her fear is not only of death, but of *that* kind of death—painful, and made more terrifying by the thought of her child left motherless: "And in truthe death appearing in this shape, was doubly terrible vnto mee. First, in respect of the paynfulnes of that kinde of death, an[d] next of the losse my littell one should haue in wanting mee" (6–9, p. 46).

Yet she places her trust in divine providence: "But all things worke together for the best to those that loue God [a]nd a certain assurance that hee will give mee patience according to my payn" (10–13, p. 46). This statement reflects a deeply Protestant conviction: God acts justly, but only for those who truly love Him. The price of that justice is suffering—"according to my payn." The word "certain" may suggest latent uncertainty; perhaps she was not entirely sure of divine assistance, or perhaps she hesitated to rely too much on it. Nevertheless, one thing is clear: she felt compelled to do more for her child than merely give birth. "Yet still I thought there was som good office I might doo for my Childe more then only to bring it forthe" (13–14, p. 46). In a world full of peril, in which the devil is an ever-present threat and death seems all but inevitable, Joscelin yearns to offer some form of maternal protection. She wishes to admonish and guide her child—but again, the specter of death interrupts: "But still it came into my minde that death might depriue me of time if I should neglect the present" (17–19, p. 46). With this, we are gently ushered into her rationale for writing.

"I knew not what to doo: I thought of writinge, but then mine own weaknes appeared so manifestly, that I was ashamed, and durst not vndertake it" (19–21, p. 46). She expresses self-doubt and presents herself in the conventionally humble posture expected of women writers of her time. As one critic notes, "Joscelin's adoption of a humble, self-deprecating demeanor combined with her pious fervor perfectly fulfills the humanist ideal of the educated woman" (Beilin, 1999: 273). However, whereas figures such as Juan Luis Vives and Thomas More believed that learning would lead to virtue, Joscelin maintains that only the virtuous and wise

should be educated. This aligns with the broader theological view that only the good and pious are fit for salvation. Elaine Beilin also characterizes Joscelin's conception of education as "ambiguous," (Beilin, 1999: 273). On the one hand, Joscelin is clearly highly educated—a trait that perhaps gave her the intellectual strength to write her legacy. On the other hand, as will be discussed later, she does not wish an overly refined education for her daughter, should the child be female.

In the end, she sees no other option. Writing becomes her only way to remain present for her child in the event of her death. She ultimately surrenders to the act, offering a series of reasons that also serve to justify the text she is about to present.

> But when I could finde no other means to expresse my motherly zeale [,] I encouraged my selfe with theas reasons.
> First that I wrote to a childe and though I weare but a woman, yet to a childes iudgement, what I vnderstood might serue for a foundation to a better learning.
> agayn, I considered it was to my own **not to the world**[94] and my loue to my own might excuse my errors:
> and lastly but cheefly I comforted my selfe that my intent was good and that I was well assured God was[95] the prosperer of good purposes:
> thus resolued I writ this ensuinge Letter to our little one, to whom I could not finde a fitter hand to conuey it then thine owne, which mayst with authority see the performance of this my little legacy, of which my childe is the Executor (21-34, pp. 46-48).

The first reason Joscelin offers for writing her legacy is clear: the text might aid her child's moral and intellectual development. Secondly, the document is private, not intended for the public eye, so any errors or shortcomings will not be judged harshly by her child. Thirdly, she takes comfort in the purity of her intentions. Her purposes in writing are sincere and unselfish; there are no ulterior motives. Therefore, she trusts that God will bless her effort, as He is the "prosperer of good purposes" (30, p. 48).

Finally, who is better suited to carry out the delivery of this legacy and fulfill its aims than her own husband? He becomes the designated intercessor—the one responsible for executing her wishes and performing her maternal role by proxy. In this sense, he becomes a kind of surrogate mother through words.

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[94] It is interesting to notice that these few words "to the world" were changed in the edition of Thomas Goud to less ambitious ones; "and in priuate sort" (it can be seen in the comparative edition of Metcalfe, 2000: 48-49.

[95] This was also changed by Goad, he turned "was" into "is". (Metcalfe 2000: 48-49).

Joscelin then begins to advise her husband on the practical matters of raising a child. The first concerns are religious and moral duties. She worries that his natural gentleness may lead him to indulge the child excessively: "And dear loue as thou must be the ouerseer for gods sake when it shal fayle in duty to god or to the world do not let thy fondenes winke at such folly, but seuearly correct it. and that thy trouble may be littel when it coms to years I pray thee be careful when it is young first to prouide it a religious nurse no matter for her complexion" (34–39, p. 48). For Joscelin, one of the most important early responsibilities is choosing a nurse. In Thomas Goad's edition, this passage is altered to read: "O make choise, not so much for her complexion, as for her milde and honest disposition" (41–42, p. 49). Here Goad inserts a moralizing tone that aligns with the strictest codes of early modern propriety, in which women's behavior was constantly monitored and moralized.

Joscelin continues: "as near as may be chuse a house wheare it may not learn to swear or speak scurrilous words" (39–41, p. 48). Appropriate language is essential, regardless of the child's sex. And even if her concern might appear overly scrupulous, she defends it by emphasizing the long-term impact of early learning: once a child picks up a bad habit, it becomes difficult to correct—"blows will not mend it" (45, p. 48). No matter how sad or bereft the child may be, he or she should not be excused from correction due to the mother's absence: "And when some charitable body reprooues or corrects it for theas faults, let no body pitty it with the losse of the mother" (46–47, p. 48).

She then turns then to education: "Next, good sweet hart, keep it not from schoole, but let it learn betimes: if it bee a son, I doupt not but thou willt dedicate it to the Lord as his Minister[.] If he will pleas of his mercy to giue him grace and capacity for that great work: If it bee a daughter [,] I hope my mother Brooke [(]if thou desirest her[)] will take it amonge hers, and let them learn one lesson" (48–54, p. 48). Joscelin expresses her hopes plainly if the child is a boy: he should be dedicated to God's service as a minister, if God grants him the grace and capacity for such a vocation. However, if the child is a girl, the situation appears more complex and layered with justifications, metaphors, and contingency—as will be explored later in the text.

The reference to "mother Brooke" in this passage refers to her stepmother, Katherine Nevell, her father's second wife. As previously noted, Joscelin's inclusion of her stepmother in this deeply personal testament suggests that her relationship with her father and his second family was amicable and stable.

> I desire her bringinge vp may bee learninge the Bible, as my sisters doo. good huswifery, writing, and good work: other learninge a woman needs not though I admire it in those whom god hathe blesst with discretion, yet I desired not much in my own hauing seen that sometimes women haue greater portions of learninge than wisdome, which is of no better vse to them than a Mayne sayle to a fly-boat, which runs it vnder water, but wheare learning and wisdom meet in a vertuous disposed woman, she is the **fittest closet for all good[ness.]** She is like a **well-ballaced ship** that may beare all her saile she is (58-64, p. 50).

Being herself a learned woman—far more so than the average—Joscelin's reluctance to wish the same intellectual path for her unborn child is striking. Perhaps, as Thomas Goad notes in his *Approbation*, "The latter yeeres of her life she addicted to no other studies than Diuinity" (81–82, p. 43), Joscelin had become so immersed in religious study that she deemed it the most appropriate intellectual pursuit for a girl. The metaphor of the vessel is ancient. It was Saint Paul who referred to women as "the weaker vessel" in his First Epistle of Peter (not Ephesians, as commonly misattributed).[96] This Pauline image persisted for centuries and reinforced the notion that women should be educated—but only to a limited degree. Excessive learning might make them proud, and pride—along with the related lack of humility and modesty—was, in Joscelin's eyes, among the most dangerous vices.

> Dearest, I am so fearefull to bring thee a proud high minded childe[,] that[,] though I know thy care will need no spur yet I cannot but desire thee to double thy watchfulness ouer this vice[,] it is such a crafty diuelishe insinuatinge it will enter little children in the likenes of wit, with which their parents are delighted, and that is sweet norishment to it. I pray thee dear hart[,] delight not to haue a bould childe[:] modesty and humility are the sweetest ground works of all vertue (86-93, p. 50).

Joscelin also considers matters of household economy and pleads with her husband not to be overly generous with clothing: "I pray thee be not profuse in the expence of clothes for it me thins it is a vayn delight in parents to bestow that cost vppon one childe which woud serue too or three if they haue them not of theyr

[96] Antonia Fraser has transformed the sentence into a magnificent two-volume book, *The Weaker Vessel* (1997) She explains in her introduction that William Tyndale's translation of the New Testament in 1526 was the first one to employ the term, and it was given further prominence by the King James Bible.

own Pauper vbique iacet" (97–99, p. 52). The Latin quotation—Joscelin's first and only direct citation of a classical author—comes from Ovid's *Fasti* 1.218 and translates as "A poor man lies low everywhere."[97]

In this passage, Joscelin articulates a view deeply aligned with Calvinist rather than merely Anglican values: she advocates humility, frugality, self-restraint, and simplicity. Lavish clothing, in her view, is not only unnecessary but morally questionable—particularly in a world where poverty is so pervasive. Extravagance in dress becomes a symbol of vanity and waste.

In concluding the letter, Joscelin reflects on her hesitation to write at all and acknowledges the possibility that she may be mistaken in doing so. Yet the prevailing emotional tone is not one of joy or hope for life, but rather of calm resignation. She appears astonishingly certain of her impending death and expresses concern over the painful reading experience she is leaving behind for her husband. She begins by affirming the honesty and intimacy of their relationship: "But I know thou wonderest by this time what the caus should bee that wee two continually vnclaspinge our harts one to another[,] I should reserue thi[s] to writ[.]" (102–104, p. 52). Although she describes the openness that characterizes their bond, she also admits that her most profound fears had remained unspoken. Now, she offers an explanation.

> When thou think thus, deare remember how greeuos it was to thee but to hear me say I may dy, and thou willt confess this would haue bin an vnpleasing discourse to thee and thou knowst I neuer durst displeas thee willingly so much I loue thee (104-108, p. 52).

At some point, the couple had discussed the possibility of Elizabeth's death, but it appears that Mr. Turrell found the topic distressing. As a result, Elizabeth chose to write in secret rather than raise the subject openly in conversation. She did not wish to trouble or displease her husband—even with the thought of her own eventual and possible death. Yet she speaks of her death with such certainty that the idea of her survival becomes the improbable element in the equation,

> And though I thus write to thee as hartely desiringe to bee religiously prepared to dy, yet my deare I despayr not of life nay I hope and daily pray for it so God will be pleased.

[97] This quote appears in the aforementioned corrections by Thomas Goud, as well as in the edition by Sylvia Brown (1999: 132). However, Brown translates it as "the poor lie (or languish) everywhere)."

> Nor shall I thinke this labour lost though I doo liue for I will make it my own lookinge glasse whearin to see when I am too seuear when too remiss, and in my childes fault thorough this glass discern mine own error, and I hope God wil so giue me his grace that I shall more skilfully act then apprehend a mothers duty (111-119, p. 52).

Thus, in what is presented as the improbable possibility of her survival, the work accomplished in writing her legacy will not be in vain. She proposes to use it as a *looking-glass*—a mirror by which to measure her child's development and success, or perhaps to evaluate her own virtues and shortcomings. However, if we attend closely to the text, she refers only to her faults, in a distinctly Calvinist manner, marked by severity and self-reproach ("severe," "remiss," "mine own error"). As Teresa Feroli notes, Puritans and Calvinists were deeply invested in self-examination and introspection (Feroli, 1994: 92)—an observation borne out in earlier chapters of this study. Joscelin's emphasis on severity, self-discipline, and self-control also reflects a Calvinist understanding of the soul's condition.

What is particularly striking in this final passage of Joscelin's letter is her use of the metaphor of the mirror. This allusion suggests her familiarity with the *speculum* tradition, which had a long and significant history in European intellectual culture. The term *speculum*, used to describe books of moral and philosophical instruction (and later to inform the development of the encyclopaedia),[98] likely has diverse origins, with roots in Indian and Persian traditions (Bradley, 1954: 100-15). Such compendia—like systems of numbers or the game of chess—were transmitted to Europe through Islamic culture, and they became immensely popular during the Middle Ages, a tradition that continued into the early modern period.[99]

By referring to her own book as a mirror (Feroli uses the term "yardstick", 1984: 91) Joscelin reveals her awareness of this longstanding literary and

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[98] In 2008 there came out an excellent Spanish publication concerning the influence of these "Mirrors" into the creation of the first French *Encyclopedia*, and focusing on the Hispanic situation. See Alvar, ed., *Las Enciclopedia en España antes de la Enciclopedia* (2008).

[99] "In 1540 Antonio Lafreri, a native of Besançon transplanted to Rome, began publishing maps and other printed images that depicted major monuments and antiquities in Rome. These images were intended to appeal to the taste for classical antiquity that fuelled the cultural climate of the Renaissance. After Lafreri published a title page in the mid-1570s, collections of these prints came to be known as the *Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae*, the "Mirror of Roman Magnificence." Tourists and other collectors who bought prints from Lafreri made their own selections and had them individually bound. Over time, Lafreri's title page served as starting point for large and eclectic compilations, expanded and rearranged by generations of collectors"*Speculum Romanae Magnificentiae"*. N. A. University of Chicago Library, 2007. Digital Collection.

philosophical tradition. At the same time, the reference signals that she did not consider her text a mere anecdotal document or a private, ephemeral piece. Rather, she seems to aspire to inscribe it within an established genre. Her work, then, carries greater significance than she overtly claims. And yet, perhaps regretting the boldness of this suggestion, she quickly adopts a more conventional tone of humility, reverting to the familiar rhetorical posture of modesty associated with Renaissance female authorship.

> My dear thou knowest me so well I shall not need to tell thee I haue written honest thoughts in a disordred fashion not obseruinge method. For thou knowst how short I am of learninge and naturall endowments to take such a cours in writing, or if that stronge affection of thi[ne]haue hid my weaknes from thy sight I now professe seriously my own ignoranc[e] and though I did not, this following **treatis** would betray it, but I send it only to the eys of a most louing housband and [of] a childe exceedingly beloued to whom I hope it will not be altogether vnprofitable.
>
> Thus humbly desiringe god to giue thee all comfort in this life and happiness in the life to com I leaue thee and thine to his most gracious protection:
>
> Thine inuiolable,
>
> Eliza. Iocelin.

However, the letter is far from conventional, as the text is infused with sadness and a strong sense of farewell. There is even a subtle hint of pride when Joscelin refers to her work as a "treatise." While she adopts the traditional rhetoric of modesty expected of women writers, she also appears conscious of the value and quality of her words. These words are carefully justified throughout the letter by her love for her family, her devotion to God, the desire to bequeath something meaningful to her unborn child, and the looming certainty of her prophetic, imminent death. There is a quiet tenderness in this introductory letter that appeals deeply to the reader.

In the nineteenth century, the letter to her husband was received with extraordinary admiration. As previously mentioned, Robert Lee praised it in his introduction. Additionally, an anonymous letter addressed to Sarah Hale, the editor of the American edition of Joscelin's work, stated, "I think no one can read her letter to her husband without tears" (Metcalfe, 2000: 13).

In the twentieth century, scholarly attention shifted toward the cultural and historical framework surrounding Joscelin's writing (for instance: Travitsky in 2001, Sizemore in 1976 or Beilin in1987), though there are notable exceptions. Teresa Feroli's 1994 study, for example, focuses on themes of depression and suicidal ideation in *The Mother's Legacy*. In the twenty-first century, scholars have begun to approach Joscelin's work from more innovative perspectives. Ailsa Grant Ferguson, for instance, interprets the legacy as a form of *prosopopoeia*, wherein Joscelin speaks "from the grave" with "posthumous agency [that] is rhetorically powerful" (Grant Ferguson, 2017: 4).

Regardless of approach, what Joscelin undeniably accomplishes in this letter is the articulation of both a justification for her writing—as the sacred legacy of a dying mother—and a clear explanation of its purpose. This work is not intended for the wider world, but solely for her child-to-be (and, in the first instance, for her husband, who would bear the responsibility of reading it to their child).

3.5 A Book for All Seasons

If I have chosen this well-known phrase—originally written by Erasmus in Latin[100] in the preface to *Moriae Encomium* (1511)—it is because Joscelin's book was intended to be used throughout the day (with a section corresponding to each part of it) and, potentially, throughout the entire life of the child-to-be. If we consider that *Books of Hours* were medieval illuminated manuscripts designed for use during the eight canonical hours of the Christian liturgy, featuring prayers and meditative texts, then it is plausible to suggest that Joscelin was attempting something similar: her own version of a *Book of Hours*.

In Joscelin's case, seven sections are explicitly devoted to different times of day, while the remaining five (unnamed) provide more general advice and life guidance. Notably, one of these focuses on the observance of the Sabbath, which we will analyse in greater detail later. Could it be that *Books of Hours* served as her inspiration? Perhaps—although none of the scholars consulted thus far have proposed this possibility. Joscelin's structure guides her unborn child from morning to night through this textual object. Logically, the first section is dedicated to the early hours of the day. What to *do* is important—but what to *think* upon waking is even more so.

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[100] A wonderful explanation of the genre is given by Dr. Clarence H. Miller: *On "A Man for all Seasons"*. Thomas More Studies Conference, 5 November 2005. https://thomasmorestudies.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Miller_on_man_for_all_seasons.pdf. Accessed 1st June 2025.

Before beginning these daily meditations, however, and following her letter to her husband, Joscelin inserts a letter addressed directly to her unborn child. It bears no formal title, but it is deeply emotional. In it, she tells the child that, after having earnestly begged God for the gift of conception, her deepest desire was to ensure their happiness.

> Hauinge longe [she was childless for six years] often earnestly desired of god that I might be a mother to one of his children (…) it drew me into a consideration bothe whearfore I so earnestly desired thee and (hauinge found that the true cause; was to make thee happy) how I might compass this happiness for thee (1-6, p. 56).

But how could happiness be achieved in 1622? Is it found in gold, health, wisdom—or in God? Or is it, ultimately, a matter of the soul? Joscelin makes her own understanding of happiness abundantly clear: "I knew it consisted not in honor wealthe strengthe of body or frends (though all theas are great blessings), thearfore it had bin a poor and weake desire to desire thee only for an heir. To my fortune no I neuer aymed at so poore an inheritance for thee as the whole world (…)" (6–11, p. 56). And again, more explicitly: "The true reason I haue so often kneeled to god for thee is that thou mightiest bee an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven" (17–19, p. 56). She further insists that, if the child were to be a boy, she would wish for him to become a minister—even though she acknowledges it is not a respected or profitable profession in her time:

> (…) that thou mayst serue him as his minister, if he make thee a man: it is true that this age houlds it a most contemptible office fit only for poor mens children younger brothers and such as haue no other means to lieu but (…) fortefy your selfe with remembringe of how great worthe the winning of one soule is in gods sight (23–27, p. 58).

Here Joscelin alludes to the long-standing tradition of primogeniture, whereby the eldest son inherited the family estate, and younger sons—lacking material inheritance—often entered professions such as the ministry, the military, administration, or law (Metcalfe, 2000: 132). Her reference to the soul as more valuable than all earthly wealth likely draws from Matthew 16:26: "For what shall it profit a man, though he should winne the whole world, if hee lose his owne soule?" (Metcalfe, 2000: 132). This was also a recurring theme in the final letters of Thomas More, who famously claimed that a man might lose his head and receive no harm. In this framework, the soul is so precious that tending to it daily renders

any man who does so truly happy. Consequently, a minister—who labours constantly for the good of souls—ought to be among the happiest of men. Joscelin expresses this belief unequivocally: "I may plainly say that of all men they are the most truly happy they are familiar with god they labor in his vineyard without ceasing and they are so beloued of him that he giues them abundance of knowledge" (33–37, p. 58). But what if the child were to be a girl? Joscelin does not overlook this possibility: "If thou beest a daughter thou mayst perhaps thinke I haue lost my labor but read on and thou shalt see my loue and care of thee and thy saluation is as great as if thou weart a son and my fear greater" (54–58, pp. 58–60). Her daughter, Joscelin insists, will one day recognize the value of her words—and the depth of maternal love and anxiety behind them. When she is grown, she will understand what parents do for their children, and she will come to appreciate her mother's legacy, even after her death.

> It may peraduenture when thou comst to som discretyon appear strange to thee to receyue theas lines from a Mother that dyed when thou weart borne but when thou seest men purchas land and store vp tresure for theyr [vnborne] babes wonder not at me that I am carefull for thy saluatyon beeing such an eternall portyon: and not knowinge whether I shall liue to instruct thee when thou art born let mee not be blamed though I write to thee before. Whoo would not condem me if I should be careless of thy body while it is within me[?] Sure a far greater care belongs to thy soule[,] to both these cares I will endeuour my selfe so long as I liue (58-68, p. 60).

In this excerpt—emotionally powerful and consistently cantered on the prospect of the mother's death—several familiar tropes emerge. Foremost is the idea that the richness and purity of the soul are at least as valuable as physical salvation or material success. In Luke 12:16–21, we find the parable of the rich man,[101] but the motif recurs throughout Scripture. One of the most cited verses, also used by Thomas More in his final letters, is from Matthew 16:26: "For what

[101] "And he put forth a parable unto them, saying, The ground of a certain rich man brought forth fruits plenteously. Therefore he thought with himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no *room* where I may lay up my fruits? And he said, This will I do, I will pull down my barns, and build greater, and therein will I gather all my fruits, and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years, live at ease, eat, drink, and take thy pastime. But God said unto him, O fool, this night will they fetch away thy soul from thee: then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So *is* he that gathereth riches to himself and is not rich in God." Luke, chapter 12:16-21, *Geneva Bible*, 1560: 1020-1021. The example has been used by Brown, S., op. cit., p. 133.

shall it profit a man, though he should win the whole world, if he lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"[102]

Another key theme that must be addressed is Joscelin's unwavering certainty about her own death. She is so convinced that she will die in childbirth that the entire text reads as though she is constructing a "ghostly image" of herself (Feroli, 1994: 95). This may be the meaning behind her allusion to the potential strangeness her daughter might feel upon encountering the book later in life. In this sense, Joscelin's text reaches toward a form of immortality—one sustained through her child's memory and moral imagination.

There is also an unexpected treasure within this passage: Joscelin affirms that her text is a private communication. "I write not to the world but to mine own childe. whoo it may bee will more profit by a few weake instructions cominge from a dead mother (whoo cannot euery day prays or reprooue it as it deserues) then far better from much more learned" (72–75, p. 60). This statement is both poignant and revealing. Writing, for a woman in early modern England, was often considered a transgressive act —especially when it extended beyond personal devotion or domestic record-keeping. Joscelin attempts to justify this act first in her letter to her husband, as previously discussed, and now by emphasizing the privacy of her intention. This is not a public document, she insists, but a personal legacy. By framing the work as private, she pre-empts potential criticism. And yet, we cannot fully determine whether her writing was solely motivated by maternal duty—or whether it also concealed a deeper, perhaps unspoken desire for authorship.

At the close of this introductory section, Joscelin returns to a register of tender, loving repetition.

> Theas things considered neyther the true knowledge of mine own weaknes nor the fear this may com to the worlds ey and bringe scorn vppon my graue can stay my hand from expressinge how much I couet thy saluation thearfore, **dear childe reade hear my loue** and if God take Me from thee bee obedient to theas instructions as thou oghtest to be vnto me I haue learnt them out of gods word I beseech him that they may bee profitable to thee (75-82: 60).

It is, at the very least, striking that Joscelin considers the act of writing potentially shameful—something that might bring scorn even upon her grave. Yet

[102] Mathew 16: 26, *Geneva Bible,* 1560: 971.

the mother reassures her daughter: this will not happen, as the letter was never intended for public view. It remains hidden from the eyes of the world. To underscore the physical intimacy of the text, Joscelin writes, "read here my love".[103] An absent mother—forever unable to express her affection in person—entrusts paper and ink to carry the weight of her maternal presence. In this way, words become a surrogate for touch, and writing itself becomes a personification of her motherhood.[104]

It is for this reason that Joscelin instructs her daughter to obey "these instructions" just as she would have obeyed her mother in life, had she survived.

3.5.1 One: a presentation of the first fruits of youth

The section numbered "1" can only be understood as Joscelin's offering of her child to God. Is this child not, after all, "the first fruit of her youth"? Joscelin expresses her desire for her child to be righteous from an early age, and she draws on the biblical story of Cain and Abel as a model. According to Joscelin, when Abel prepared his offering to God, he declared: "I will present to him the first fruits of my youthe" (100–101, p. 62). While Joscelin is paraphrasing rather than quoting Scripture directly, the adaptation serves her rhetorical purpose well: it emphasizes the formative significance of youth as the foundation for virtuous adulthood.

To reinforce this point, Joscelin also invokes a proverb popular in her time: "Looke with what the vessell is first seasoned it retayns the taste." This well-known saying derives from Horace's *Epistles* (I.2, "To Lollius"): *Quo semel est imbuta recens servabit odorem testa diu*. It was cited by William Gouge in *Of Domesticall Duties* and is also recorded in Morris Palmer Tilley's *Dictionary of the Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Brown, 199: 133). The proverb's meaning is clear: early instruction shapes long-term moral character. Just as a vessel retains the flavor of its first seasoning, so too will a child retain the impressions formed in youth.

The mother instructs her child to meditate continually on the blessings received from God: "meditate vppon the benefits thou continually receyuest" (91–92, p. 62). She parallels the freshness of youth with the first moment of the day—morning—as a symbolic offering: "My first thoughts will I dedicate to him. like Abell's sacrifice I will present to him the first fruits of my youth" (100–101, p. 62).

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[103] "I send it only to the eys of a most loving housband and a childe exceedingly beloued to I hope it will not be all together vnprofitable" (26-28: 54).

[104] The act of using the text as a prolongation of motherhood itself is also explored in Grant Ferguson, Ailsa (2017: 91-110).

Even if she should live into old age, Joscelin assures the child, she will remain spiritually devoted: "weaknes will not let my knees bow nor my hands be lifted vp yet shall my hart meditate on his goodness night and day" (103–104, p. 62).

Because it is essential that her unborn child reach adulthood in a righteous and virtuous manner, Joscelin concludes with a directive: "to more esily perform theas dutis Marke I pray thee theas following rules for ordering thy [life] spend the day as I instruct thee and God will blesse thee and all thy good endeuors" (110–113, p. 62). In these lines, she establishes two clear purposes: to introduce her child to the devotional text that follows, and to instill the conviction that the impressions and habits formed in youth are crucial to a virtuous future.

Implicitly—and perhaps unconsciously—Joscelin may also be offering her own "first fruits" to God: physically, in the form of her child; spiritually, in the form of her written words. Both become sacred gestures of protection and guidance.

3.5.2 Two: first thing in the morning

The meditation on the mercies of God, Joscelin insists, should be the first act of the day. Morning thoughts must be kept pure: "be carefull of thy selfe that thou harbor in thy brayn no vayn or vnprofitable" (114–15, p. 62). The devil is always at work, tempting souls, and the primary defense against temptation is prayer: "(…) be warned and armed Against his tentations for bee assured if thou once yeeld to neglect prayinge to god but one halfe houre when that time coms thou shallt finde thy selfe far more vnapt thy hart more dull to pray then before" (127–30, p. 64).

For Joscelin, spiritual battle begins the moment one wakes. Just as the devil lurks in darkness while her child sleeps, prayer is the first defense against that unseen danger. Thus, she insists that true prayer cannot be idle or mechanical: "Then beeinge thoroughly awake (for sure god likes not sleepy prayr) begin to giue God thanks and to desire the continuance of his mercy towards thee in theas words (…)" (151–54, p. 64).

She follows with a morning prayer she composes herself—a plea full of thanksgiving, protection from harm, and a petition for grace in thought and action. It concludes with the hope that, should death come suddenly, "I may dy in thy fauor" (164, p. 66).

3.5.3 Three: Repentance

Once God has been invited into the soul, Joscelin warns, He must not be driven out through carelessness or willful sin: "Oh watch oh be wary: do not my deare

child oh do not willfully offend him for hardly are presumptuous sins forgiven" (171–73, p. 66).

Even so, God's apparent severity can be softened through swift repentance: "but if out of weakenes thou offend against him run strayght before hee can bee gon for he is mercifull and will stay a while after thou hast sinned to expect thy repentance but if thou doest not make hast then the diuell whoo will not delay to seek thy destruction" (173–77, p. 66).

The pressure is intense. The Puritan character of Joscelin's theology is unmistakable. The God she describes is stern, demanding, and watchful—one whose mercy is real, but not guaranteed without immediate contrition. The emphasis on vigilance, self-discipline, and fear of divine judgment aligns unmistakably with the core tenets of English Puritanism.

But how should we define *Puritanism*? The term resists easy categorization. According to Patrick Collinson:

> Puritanism was much more than a quarrel with the Elizabethan settlement. It is hardly an exaggeration to say that it was the Real English Reformation; an extensive program of national renewal which aspired to reform popular culture, everything from maypoles, football, plays and pubs to speech and dress code, and above all the use of Sunday, now called the Sabbath—a set of values that applied the Old Testament to life much as some Muslim regimes apply shariah law, and, yes, it included the death penalty for adultery, although puritan ministers lacked the power of imams and ayatollahs to activate it (…). Puritanism consisted, at its heart, of something called 'practical divinity,' a strenuous search for salvation according to Calvinist understandings. (Collinson, 2003: 117).

In short, Puritans were religious extremists by modern standards, yet they were also deeply committed to a lived experience of godliness. Figures such as Richard Baxter, Thomas Gouge, William Bates, and John Owen were influential Puritan writers and theologians. Thomas Gouge's *Of Domesticall Duties* (1622)—published the same year as Joscelin's *Legacy*—was one of the most influential household conduct books of the seventeenth century, as noted in the theoretical framework of this thesis.

According to Patricia Crawford, Puritanism was largely a matter of emphasis rather than absolute distinction: "(...) the differences between Anglicans and Puritans were matters of degree and emphasis; both shared a common culture (…).

To associate piety exclusively with Puritanism would be a mistake (…). Despite differences of faith between Protestant, Puritan, and Catholic woman, their patterns of piety had many features in common" (Crawford, 1993: 76).

While it is clear that piety should not be associated exclusively with Puritanism, it is equally true that Puritan culture fostered intense devotion and often mystical engagement with the divine. For many women, such as Joscelin, God became a refuge—perhaps in part because of the profound isolation they experienced. In Joscelin's case, her prayers are infused with fear, and her image of God is one of sternness and inflexibility; forgiveness is not easily granted once sin has been committed, as observed in the previous section.

Joscelin also draws upon the body as a metaphorical landscape for sin, referencing different parts of the body to illustrate the various ways sin may manifest.

> Esteem no sin small but what member soeuer caused thee to offend him bring it before him and let it assist thee chiefly in thy repentance [.] If thine ey teache thee wantoness, couetousnes or the like let them powr forthe tears to purchase thee a pardon[.] If thy tonge haue offended toward god [or] thy neighbor bringe it with shame and sorrow to confess in priuat what it was not ashamed to glory in public[.] Learn to be ashamed to commit sin[,] but being comitted hope not to hide it from god by any other means then harty repentance (180-189, p. 66) .

According to Sylvia Brown (Brown, 1999: 133) these words recall Matthew 5:29: "Wherefore if thy right eye cause thee to offend, pluck it out and cast it from thee: for better it is for thee that one of thy members perish, than that thy whole body should be cast into hell." To this, we may also add that repentance features prominently in the morning prayers of *The Book of Common Prayer*, which includes the well-known excerpt from the parable of the prodigal son (or the lost sheep) in Luke 15:18–19: "I will arise and go to my father, and say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thine hired servants" (*Book of Common Prayer* ed., 2012: 67).

When all seems lost, the only recourse is to persist and cry out for mercy. Joscelin draws upon the example of Jacob—spelled "Jaakob" in the Geneva Bible (1560)—who "cried with a feruent spirit I will not let thee go except thou blesse mee our Sauior saythe the Kingdom of heauen suffrethe violence and the violent take it by force" (197–99, p. 68). The actual biblical reference reads:

> And he said, Let me go, for the morning appeareth. Who answered, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. Then said he unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And said he, Thy name shall be called Jacob no more, but Israel: because thou hast had power with God, thou shalt also prevail with men (Genesis, 32: 26-28).

This instance clearly shows that Joscelin was citing Scripture from memory. Her central point, however, remains unmistakable: forgiveness must be sought at all costs, because the preservation of the soul—eternal by nature—is paramount. This is, in fact, the core message of the book and its most urgent piece of advice: ensure that your soul prevails, and that it remains aligned with God.

3.5.4 Four: Sloth

Having explored the theme of sin with Joscelin as our guide, we now turn to her reflections on laziness—or *slothfulness*, as it was commonly called in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. "Salomon promises no other patrimony to a sluggard but pouerty" (208–09, p. 68), she writes. Numerous proverbial sayings reinforced this view of sloth as a spiritual and moral failing: "The idle body and the idle braine is the shoppe of the deuill,"[105] or "the sluggard's guise, loathe to go to bed and loathe to rise."[106] The quotation from Solomon is drawn from *Proverbs* 6:9–11: "How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep—so shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man."

Joscelin also draws implicitly on other biblical texts that condemn idleness, such as Matthew 25:1–29,[107] but what stands out most in this section is her sincere maternal concern. She dreads the possibility that her child might grow up to be lazy or fail in the stewardship of the family's fortune. In order to encourage diligence, responsibility, and mental preparedness for daily work, Joscelin composes yet another prayer. Considering that this is now the third hour of the day—following the morning prayer in part two and the call to repentance in part three—it is likely that Joscelin is imagining the rhythm of her child's adult life.

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[105] This proverb comes from William Perkins (1603), as established by Speake in the Oxford *Dictionary of Proverbs* (1982: 160-161).
[106] This proverb is compiler in Tilley, *A Dictionary of The Proverbs in England in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (1950: 612).
[107] This is the famous quotation "For unto every man that hath, it shall be given, and he shall have abundance, and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away" (Matthew, 25:29).

From her distant vantage point in the past, she encourages her child to act with integrity, efficiency, and a sense of divine purpose, aligning with the Puritan ideal of disciplined daily labor. The prayer serves not only as moral instruction but also as a source of spiritual strength to begin the day: "I beseech thee this day to gouern, keep, and blesse me" (221–22, p. 68).

3.5.5 Five: Pride and Vanity

Several monsters— "devils," as Joscelin calls them—can obstruct the path to becoming a true Christian. Pride and vanity, in particular, may arise throughout the day, once slothfulness has been overcome.

> Thou art noe sooner broke out of the arms of slothe but pride steps in diligently waytinge to furnish thee with any vayn toy in thy attire and though I beleeue theare are diuers sortsof pride more pestilent to the soule then this of apparel, yet this is enough dangerous and I am sure betrays a mans folly more then any other (226-231, p. 70).

Joscelin even mocks the "fashionists"—those who spend their time absorbed in the latest trends: "theas fashionists have I feare changed theyr reasonable souls for proud souls" (237–38, p. 70). Is she not imagining her child, now an adult, dressing in the morning? Is she not gently urging modesty and humility in dress? The more we read, the more the *Legacy* begins to resemble a *Book of Hours*—a devotional guide structured around the hours of the day. Tenderness pervades the text as we draw closer to a mother who, knowing her time is short, tries to inhabit the future through an imagined adult reader—perhaps a son, perhaps a daughter. She takes great care to shape each portion of the day according to the principles of piety and devotion, so that she might remain a faithful companion to her child even from the grave.

Girls, according to Joscelin, face a particular challenge when it comes to vanity: "If thou bee a daughter I confesse thy task is harder because thou art weaker and thy temptations to this vice greater" (245–47, p. 70). The notion of woman as the "weaker vessel" predates Christianity, though the most widely cited verse appears in 1 Peter 3:7: "Likewise ye husbands, dwell with them as men of knowledge, giving honor unto the woman, as unto the weaker vessel, even as they which are heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers be not interrupted."

Yet in Joscelin's usage, this "weakness" is tied not to physical frailty, but to emotional and moral vulnerability—especially to envy: "For thou shalt see those

whoo perhaps thou wilt thinke lesse able exalted far aboue thee in this kinde and it may bee thou wilt desire to be like them if not to outgoe them" (247–49, p. 70). This, she warns, leads nowhere: "But beleeue and remember that I tell thee the end of all theas vanitys is bitter as gall" (249–51, p. 70). *Proverbs* 31:30 echoes the same sentiment: "Favor is deceitful, and beauty is vanity: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised."

Joscelin envisions a sobering moment of reckoning at the end of her daughter's life. If, after so many years, her daughter has pursued nothing but superficial beauty and fleeting fashion, what will she find? Only regret:

> Oh the remembrance of misspent time; when thou shall grow in years and haue attayned no higher knowledge then to dress thy selfe, when thou shalt see halfe perhaps all thy time spent and that of all thou hast sowed thou hast nothinge to reap but repentance[,] late repentance, how wilt thou greeue[,] how wilt thou accuse one folly for bringing another (251–57, p. 70).

There may be a subtle wordplay here between *sowing* and *sewing*, given the context of dress and vanity—but even if unintentional, the metaphor holds. What is certainly deliberate is Joscelin's invocation of the old proverb: "you reap what you sow." According to Tilley, it appears in Erasmus's *Adagia* in the form "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Tilley, 1950: 621). The phrase ultimately derives from *Job* 4:8: "As I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same".

> God of mercy giue thee grace to remember him in the days of thy youth: Mistake me not nor giue yourself leaue to take too much liberty with saying my mother was too strict: noe I am not, for I giue you leaue to follow modest fashions but not to be a beginner of fashions nor would I haue you follow it till it be generall so that in not dooinge as others doo you might appear more singular then wise (263-269, p. 72).

In this passage, Joscelin imagines a dialogue between herself and her daughter, in which the daughter, obliged to follow her deceased mother's instructions, complains that they are too severe. Joscelin, in turn, attempts—within the space of her imagination—to calm her child, denying any undue harshness and explaining that certain allowances may be made. She appears to momentarily regret having been too strict, then tempers her stance by conceding that some "modest fashions" may be permitted. She even allows that it is acceptable to follow established

fashions—so long as one is not the first to adopt them—for fear of being judged "more singular than wise."

What makes this section particularly fascinating is how plausibly it captures the kind of dialogue one might expect between a mother and a young daughter—a daughter who wants to feel pretty and fashionable, and a mother who feels compelled to set limits. Through this imagined exchange, Joscelin reveals both emotional nuance and maternal tenderness. She empathizes with her future daughter and, though writing from the grave, extends a small but meaningful concession: a quiet indulgence in beauty, within bounds.

The biblical examples Joscelin cites to support her moral instruction are well chosen: Anna, Elizabeth, Esther, and Susanna. Anna "serued the Lord with fasting and prayr" (291, p. 72); Elizabeth "who serued god without reproof" (291–92, p. 72); Esther "whoo taught her mayds to fast and pray" (292–93, p. 72); and finally, Susanna, "whoos story I hope the strictest will allow for a worthy example" (293–94, p. 72). The story of Susanna—falsely accused of adultery—is found in the *Apocrypha* section of the Geneva Bible. Given its erotic undertones, Joscelin's reference to "the strictest" likely alludes to those who might hesitate to accept the tale as a moral example precisely because of its sexual content (Brown, 1999: 134). Yet for Joscelin, these women represent a canonical ideal: humble, devout, and modest—figures of female piety and sacrificial virtue.

The chapter concludes with a series of further biblical references reinforcing her admonitions against pride and vanity. The frequency and intensity of these citations suggest the importance Joscelin places on the subject. Indeed, this is one of the longer chapters in the *Legacy*, which underscores the weight she assigns to the dangers of feminine self-adornment. She closes section five with a tender message, a moment of maternal affection that offers a justification for the lengthy discourse on modesty and pride.

> I know in fewer words thear might much more haue bin sayd against this sin but I know not whoo will say so much to thee when I am gon, thearfore I desire thou mayst bee taught theas my instructions when thou art young that this foule sin May bee weeded out before it take deep root in thy hart[.] I will return now to my first purpose which is to set thee down one day for a pattern how I would haue spend all the days of thy life (334-342, p. 76).

"Pride is the root of all sin" (Tilley, 1950: 556) is a well-known proverb that may have served as inspiration for Joscelin's own words: "may bee weeded out before it take deep root in thy hart" (338–40, p. 76). Yet the most moving element

of this passage comes once again from the voice of the absent mother—"who will say so much to you when I am gone?" A *spectral mother* (Francus, cited in Astrom: 2017: 31). Joscelin positions herself as a guiding force who will continue to act upon her child even from beyond the grave. The physicality of the text—especially in moments like this—is palpable. The written word becomes the medium through which the dead mother's love, instruction, and care remain present.

The final part of this section reinforces Joscelin's desire to share her eternal life with her child, even in death. She has carefully designed what she believes to be a perfect—and pious—daily routine, and she feels compelled to explain it so that her child need not suffer the emotional solitude of an orphaned childhood. At the same time, this closing reflection reaffirms Joscelin's primary purpose: to avoid digressions and remain faithful to her main task—guiding her unborn child through a life full of spiritual and moral peril.

3.5.6 Six: Praying with Doctor Smiths

In this section, Joscelin strongly recommends quietness and solitude for prayer, as well as a canonical author from whom to draw morning prayers: Dr. Henry Smith. Smith's *Three Prayers: one for the morning, another for the evening, the third for a sick man* and *A Preparative to Marriage* were both published in 1591, the year of his death . Joscelin commends all of his writings. According to Sylvia Brown, Smith's prayers are lengthy and thoroughly Calvinist, "beginning with a confession of complete human corruption." (Brown, 1999: 135). It is worth noting that in the 1684 edition of *The Mother's Legacy*, Smith's prayers were removed and replaced with a recommendation to use "such Praiers as are publickly allowed, and chiefly those appointed by the Church" (Brown, 1999: 105) —a clear reference to *The Book of Common Prayer*, particularly the 1559 edition.

Thomas Fuller also wrote an introduction to one of Smith's works. Interestingly, in chapter two of that edition, under the topic of "Satan's compassing the earth," there is a striking reference to the Spaniards: "It is some vantage unto us to hear that the Spaniards are coming, before they come (...)"[108]—a remark that seems to allude to the Spanish Armada of 1588. The comparison underscores the point that the devil does not announce his arrival. The Calvinist tone in Smith's morning prayer is unmistakable, particularly in lines such as: "Our sins are

[108] Smith, Henry: *Sermon, treatises, prayers, and poems. With life of the author by Thomas Fuller*. 1867: 17. Online edition: https://dn790006.ca.archive.org/0/items/worksofhenrysmith02smit/worksofhenrysmith02smit.pdf. Accessed on 9 March 2025.

grievous and infinite, that we are fain to say with Judas, I have sinned, and there stop, because we cannot reckon them. (...) Our heart is root of corruption."[109] This emphasis on human depravity is another distinctly Puritan element that Joscelin appropriates in her devotional framework.

The entire section is devoted to guidance on daily prayer. Joscelin writes: "In advising you to a set form of praying I do not prohibit conceyued prayer but humbly beg of god to giue you grace to pray often out of your own meditation according to his will" (347–51, p. 76). Here, Joscelin affirms that spontaneous, heartfelt prayer—referred to in her day as "conceived" prayer—is preferable to fixed forms. As Brown notes, Puritans generally favored extemporaneous (i.e., unwritten and unmemorized) prayer. (Brown, 1999: 135). Nevertheless, Joscelin acknowledges the need for inspiration from recognized devotional authorities such as Smith.

Moreover, she recognizes that in the context of family life, a fixed form of prayer can serve a practical purpose—especially for household servants, who might more easily learn prayers by heart and participate in communal worship. This reflects a common Puritan household practice, as discussed in the first chapter.

3.5.7 Seven: The Study of Divinity in the Morning

As the day progresses, Mother Joscelin continues to guide the soul and thoughts of her imagined adult child—whether a girl or a boy. It is now time for study. She advises her child to "reserue a time to sit down to som good study but vse that most that may make thee greatest; diuinity. It will make thee greater richer happier then the greatest kingedom of the earthe" (362–65, p. 78). For Joscelin, the study of divinity—that is, "all things pertaining to God, his nature, and his relationship to humankind" (Brown, 1999: 135)—would bring one closer to God and confer a dignity surpassing even that of earthly monarchs.

To support this view, Joscelin offers several scriptural examples. The first comes from *John* 12:26: "If any man serve me, let him follow me: for where I am, there shall my servant be: and if any man serve me, him will my Father honor." Here, the act of service is presented as a direct imitation of Christ. Joscelin then draws from the *Book of Esther* (8:15—or, following Brown's suggestion, perhaps 6:1–10): "And Mordecai went out from the King in royal apparel of blue, and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen and purple, and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad." This serves as a reminder that

[109] Also referenced in the above-quoted (see previous note) Smith: 461.

honor and recognition come from righteous conduct. She follows with *1 Timothy* 6:6: "But godliness is great gain, if a man be content with that he hath." Additional citations from the *Psalms*—attributed in the Geneva Bible to King David—reinforce the idea that God is the greatest source of true wealth.

Collectively, these examples demonstrate that Joscelin was accustomed to devotional study. Even if, in her final years, she focused exclusively on Scripture—as Thomas Goad suggests in his *Approbation*—her capacity to recall biblical passages from memory points to an intellectually engaged and spiritually cultivated mind. It is likely that she had once studied classical texts, but eventually shifted her focus entirely to divine matters.

This same counsel she now offers to her child. In seeking divine wisdom, the child will secure not only knowledge, but also grace. Daily devotion and regular spiritual discipline were central tenets of the Anglican world, and Joscelin weaves these into the moral fabric of her *Legacy*.[110]

3.5.8 Eight: Noon Has Arrived

Speech holds particular importance for Joscelin, as human beings are naturally prone to speak foolishly. She warns:

> Remember thy creator when thou speakest as if I could vse all the exhortatyons and tell thee all the perils that belongs to speech yet so apt are wee to forget god in our foolishe taulk that sometimes wee by our discours would make gods of our selues thearfore it will not bee amiss to receyue a few instructions though weak from me for ordering thy speech (384–90, p. 78).

If the morning has been well spent in meditation, prayer, and study, it is now time for the midday meal—and there are few activities to engage in during meals besides conversation. Joscelin imagines her child preparing for lunch and takes this opportunity to caution against idle or foolish talk.

> The morning I haue dedicated to meditatyon prayr good studys and honest recreation: The noon time is most vsed for discours it beeing all a man can doo while hee eats And it is a time whearin a man ought to bee carefull of his speech hauing before him Gods good blessings to refreshe his body and honest company to

[110] Patricia Crawford has studied the idea in depth. *Women and religión in England, 1500-1720*. (1993: 79).

> [recreate] his minde Thearfore ought to be no way offensiue in his speech eyther to God or good men (391-398, p. 80).

For Joscelin, control of speech is necessary across a variety of contexts. First and foremost, it is essential not to take the name of God in vain: "that neyther heedlesnes nor earnestness in thy discours caus thee to take gods holy name in vayn" (399–400, p. 80). Here, Joscelin is referring directly to the Third Commandment, *Exodus* 20:7: "Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his Name in vain." (*Book of Common Prayer,* 2012: 256). This injunction also appears in *The Book of Common Prayer* in nearly identical language, underscoring its significance within both biblical and liturgical tradition.

The second principle regarding speech is the avoidance of slander or criticism. Even when one's neighbor speaks truthfully about another person's wrongdoing, Joscelin instructs her child to remain silent: "be rather silent then speak ill of any man though he deserue it" (402–03, p. 80). Her rationale is moral rather than social: we often harbor the same faults as those we condemn—perhaps even worse ones. Therefore, our focus should be on self-correction, not judgment. As one popular proverb of the time expressed it, "To speak ill of others is the fifth element" (Tilley, 1950: 338).

Speech also becomes a test of humility and intellectual virtue. Joscelin encourages her child to admit ignorance rather than feign understanding: "If thou desirest to better thy selfe; modestly aske a question of those whom thou seest to haue knowledge to resolue thee and bee lesse ashamed to confess thy ignorance then by houldinge a foolish argument, to betray it" (411–14, p. 80). A poorly constructed argument exposes one's ignorance far more than an honest question. In this way, humility becomes a mark of wisdom.

In a similar vein, Joscelin warns against mocking others for what they do not know: "auoyd that scornfull fashyon of questioninge A man whoo thou knowest can not make thee a satisfyinge answear neither make a scorn of his ignorance for bee assured he knowes somthing that thou doest not know" (414–18, p. 80). There was a proverb in circulation at the time—though somewhat controversial—that claimed "ignorance is the true mother of devotion." (Tilley, 1950: 337). While Joscelin does not invoke this phrase directly, her emphasis is clear: no one should take pleasure in another's ignorance, for all people possess knowledge of something that others lack. Such an attitude toward others is rooted in humility and guards against the sin of pride.

Ultimately, for Joscelin, truth must be told at all costs.

> If god haue giuen thee a ready wit take heed thou abuse it not at no time mayntaine arguments agaynst the truth [especially in sacred or morall matter][111] for it is hard to do it without offendinge the god of truthe, and by it, thou maist harm thy weake brother, but the greatest harme will bee thine owne when thou comst to giue account for thy idle words; (419-424, p. 80).

Obscene speech, Joscelin insists, has no place in the life of a good Christian. Moreover, discretion is preferable to loquacity. She draws again from the Book of Proverbs—citing Solomon—though the biblical references are paraphrased rather than quoted exactly. The correct verse from *Proverbs* 14:3 reads: "In the mouth of the foolish is the rod of pride: but the lips of the wise preserve them." Joscelin combines several scriptural references into a single meditation on wise speech: "A wise man conceals knowledge but the hart of a foole publishethe foolishnes Pro 12 23[112] and he that keepethe his mouthe keepethe his life 13.3[113]. and in the 14.5.[114] the lips of the wise preserue them" (431–35, p. 82).

As a concluding reflection on speech, Joscelin writes: "let thy tonge and thy hart go together hate dissimulation and lyinge (lying) and god will loue thee which I humbly beg of him" (436–38, p. 82). Honesty, here, is presented as a core virtue—one that will preserve the child's moral integrity and ensure closeness with God.

3.5.9 Nine: Actions After Noon

Having addressed the mind, soul, and speech, Joscelin now turns to actions. The structure of her daily guide seems to follow a spiritual rhythm: morning is dedicated to prayer and meditation, noon to reflection and speech, and the afternoon to conduct.

The mother advises her child to practice integrity at all times—even in solitude. No act is truly hidden from the Lord:

> If thou [keep thy] thoughts holy, and th[y] words pure, I shall not need to feare (…) First then bee carefull when thou art alone that thou doo nothinge that thou wouldest not doo if men saw thee remembrin[g] that gods ey is allways open, and thyne own conscience will bee witnes enough agaynst thee" (440–47, p. 82).

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[111] The words in brackets are an addition by Thomas Goude, the editor of the 1624 version.
[112] This is exactly the quotation, from Proverbs 14: 3: "A wise man concealeth knowledge: but the heart of the fools publisheth foolishness".
[113] She may be referring here to Psalms 15: 1-5.
[114] Brown explains that in fact is 14:3, not 14:5. (Brown, 1999: 136).

Knowing she will not be there to guide her child, Joscelin emphasizes the importance of internalized virtue. She seeks to instill a sense of moral self-surveillance—the kind that persists even in the absence of parental oversight. As an "absent mother," she urges her child to act with strength and goodness even when no one is watching.

But how can the child discern right from wrong? For Joscelin, the answer is simple: the commandments serve as the test.

> Whatsoeuer thou art about to doo examin it by gods commandement[s] if it bee agreeable to them; go on cheerfully, and though the end an swear not thy hopes neuer greeue nor grudge but be glad that gods will is performed and let th[y] trust in him assuer thee that all things worke together for th[e] best to them that loue god (455-460, p. 82-84). [115]

Once again, we encounter the Protestant tendency toward silent endurance, rooted in the belief that whatever happens in life is ultimately God's will. This theme also appears in the analysis of Elizabeth Walker, for instance. Joscelin writes: "And though it appear a crosse, be assured it is a blessinge" (460–61, p. 84). Even when her child might feel upset or disheartened, she seeks to offer comfort from beyond the grave: "reconcile god vnto thee bearing thy cross with patience, and doub[t] not, he that depriued thee of thy hope to try thee" (463–64, p. 84). All may be endured—except yielding to the devil: "For beleeue me my childe if thou shalt out of any worldly respect doo a dishonest act. it may bee thou mayst thriue in it a while but the end is miserable oh the burden of a wounded conscience whoo can beare?" (470–73, p. 82).

But what if, as an adult, the child observes that those who act dishonestly often prosper? In such cases, Joscelin recommends reading Psalm 73, where the prophet contemplates the apparent success of the wicked:

> Until I went into the Sanctuary of God: then understood I their end. Surely thou hast set them in slippery places, and castest them down into desolation. How suddenly are they destroyed, perished and horribly consumed! As a dream when one awaketh! O Lord, when thou raisest us up, thou shalt make their image despised (GNV Bible, 1590, Psalm 73).

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[115] Brown 1999: 136. Brown considers this quotation to be taken from Romans 8:28, but in fact the same idea appears in Joscelin's letter to Taurrell: "All things work together for the best to those that love God" (10-11, p. 46).

To reinforce this perspective, Joscelin cites the parable of the wise and foolish builders from Matthew 7:24–27.[116] She extends the metaphor by portraying the house of the foolish as one made of paper: "Alas, all theyr labour is but to build a paper house vppon the sand which though it bee neuer so glorious to look vppon a small tempest will shatter it" (480–83, p. 84). Her message is clear: the child must build a "house of the soul" upon a firm foundation—one that no storm can destroy.

Joscelin also turns to the story of Job to illustrate the virtue of enduring suffering without complaint. Though Job was afflicted with terrible misfortunes, he never cursed God. Even when his wife urged him to do so, he replied: "Thou speakest like a foolish woman: what? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and not receive evil?" In all this, Job "did not sin with his lips."[117] Once again, the Puritan ideal of suffering in silence, trusting in God's divine plan, is made explicit in the text.

The theme of divine grace appears as well: "It is grace, mear grace, that preserues gods chilldren from theas dangerous falls which grace I beseech allmighty god make vs all partakers of" (508–10, p. 86). A combination of grace, faith, and purity of thought and action will, presumably, lead the soul to heaven. Joscelin insists that one must act with full awareness of divine presence: "whatsoeuer thou doest remember thou art in the presence of god (whoo will expect an account from thee) so thou will not dare to doo euill and thou willt doo well cheerfully becaus thou art sure it pleses the Lord (…)" (512–15, p. 86).

To conclude, Joscelin reiterates the vices to avoid, beginning with swearing. She had warned against it earlier but repeats the admonition, as a mother naturally would. Truthfulness should render swearing unnecessary: "Allways keep a watche before thine own lips, and remember that thou needest not swear if thou doest not accustom thy selfe to ly" (526–28, pp. 86–88). At this point, Joscelin introduces a gendered distinction, preparing to address her daughter specifically.

> If thou beest a daughter, **thou hast a calling to which thou must not dishonour thou art a Christian and christ commands thou shouldst not swear at all.**[118] Mat.5.34. beside thou art a mayd and such ought thy modesty to bee, thou shouldst scars speak, but when thou answerest thou that art young speake if need bee and

[116] Brown has identified this biblical reference (Brown, 1999: 136).
[117] Job 2, 10.
[118] This part was changed of order (and put at the end of the paragraph) by Thomas Goud. Thanks to the edition of Le Drew Metcalfe, it can be easily spotted (Metcalfe, 2000: 89).

> yet scarsely when thou art twice asked, *Eccles.* 32. 8. (531-537, p. 88).

In instances such as these, we can observe that Joscelin aspired to belong to the category of chaste and spiritual women, while simultaneously performing an unusual task for a woman of her time: writing an entire book for her unborn child. She does not wish for her daughter to emulate her in this act, as she made clear at the beginning of the book, when she advised her husband that excessive knowledge in a woman was unbecoming. The solution she found is paradoxical: to advise the opposite of what she herself is doing. In this case, she justifies her writing not by ambition or intellect, but through the lens of maternal duty and the looming fear of death.

Drunkenness is another vice she warns against, followed by what she terms the "darling sin." At first glance, the use of the word "darling" might suggest a reference to romantic or sexual love, but in the Puritan context, it refers instead to a recurring and deeply ingrained sin—one that the sinner clings to tenaciously.

Joscelin addresses all the behaviors she considers reprehensible in order to help her child avoid them. At times she repeats herself, as any concerned mother might do, but she consistently supports her admonitions with references to authoritative sources: saints, prophets, and biblical parables—just as a Renaissance scholar would.

3.5.10 Ten: The Evening Comes

The day is drawing to a close. Perhaps Joscelin imagined her weary daughter or son retiring to their chamber, ready for sleep or for a quiet moment of sacred reading by candlelight. For Joscelin, evening is a time for silent reflection and inner stillness.

This is not one of the longer sections of the book. Joscelin urges her child to end the day just as it began: in meditation, prayer, thanksgiving, and repentance.

> so shut vp the day with humble thanksgiuinge for all the benefits that day receaued harty repentance for all thy sins committed naming and bewaylinge them For thou knowest not if thou repentest not to night whether thou shallt liue tomorrow[119] and though thou weart sure of it yet the oftner thou makest euen thy accounts with God thy sleeps will bee the sounder and thou shalt

[119] Goude's edition adds "to repent", in the same Metcalfe edition that we are working with (if you shall live *to repent* tomorrow) (602: 91).

> awake with a hart full of ioy and ready to serue the Lord (580-587, p. 90).

The presence of death is overwhelming in Joscelin's mind. Yet even if her child lives one more day, the very act of praying and asking for forgiveness for sins committed will lead to a more restful and comforting sleep.

3.5.11 Eleven: The Observance of the Sabbath

This section marks a shift in focus within the book. It appears that Joscelin concentrated her efforts on addressing the spiritual rhythm of the entire week. While the days from Monday to Saturday might follow similar patterns, Sunday required particular attention. As a sacred day, it could not be overlooked. On the contrary, Joscelin devotes significant attention to what would later be termed "Sabbatarianism" within the Puritan tradition. The entire passage functions as an admonition to attend church and to observe the Fourth Commandment with strict diligence. According to Jerry Davis (Davis, 1969: 51-55), a tragic accident in which a scaffold collapsed and killed eight people was interpreted by the Puritan John Field as divine punishment for Sabbath-breaking—an indication that the day should be strictly kept holy. Although a law to enforce this view was proposed, it was ultimately vetoed by Queen Elizabeth. *The True Doctrine of the Sabbath*, published in 1595 by Nicholas Bownd, was a widely circulated treatise advocating for a moral reformation of English society and, crucially, for rigorous Sabbath observance. Despite attempts to suppress the book, such efforts proved ineffective. As a result, "the rigid observance of the Sabbath became a distinguishing mark of Puritanism," (Davis, 1969: 52) although it never achieved complete societal acceptance.

Joscelin echoes this insistence on church attendance and draws a parallel with Jewish Sabbath practices on Saturday. Interestingly, Thomas Goad omits any mention of Judaism in his editorial treatment of the text. He refers only to the Christian duty to honor the sacred seventh day as prescribed in the Old Testament. Joscelin, however, is explicit:

> Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbathe day this duty so often and earnestly comanded by god himself so strictly obserued by the Jews (whoo that day might kindell noe firenor vse any labor insomuch that the Lord whoo is the god [of] mercy him selfe comanded the man that gathered sticks on that day to be stoned) (…) (595-600, p. 92).

For Puritans, the Sabbath was Sunday. They believed in the need for purification, as morality was often neglected during holidays and Sundays in England. Sabbatarianism was not merely one doctrine among many for the Puritans; it was considered the "essential social teaching" (Sprunger, 1982: 24-38). This particular form of Sabbatarianism was unique to the English Protestant tradition and did not develop in the same way in other cultures, as Jerry Davis and Keith Sprunger have noted.[120]

This provides further evidence that Joscelin was a fervent Puritan who believed in the strict observance of the Sabbath. She repeatedly insists on attending church on Sundays and paying close attention to the pastor's sermon, emphasizing that many valuable lessons can be learned through careful listening.

> So approach [*and enter*[121]], with reuerent and feruent zeale the house of god and throwinge away all thoughts but such as may further the good worke thou art about bend thy knees and hart to god desiringe of him his holy spirit, that thou maist ioyn with the congregatyon in zealous prayr and earnest attentyon of his word preached and though *perhaps* thou hearest a minister preache as thou thinkest weakly yet giue him thyne attention and spend not the time in reading or any other meditations, and thou shalt finde that he will deliuer something profitable to thy soule, either that thou hast not heard before or not marked or forgotten or not well put in practise. And it is fit thou shouldest bee often put in mind of those things concern thy saluation (666-677: 96, emphasis by Goud).

So, the day was over, Sunday had come, but Joscelin felt a desperate need to write a little more—perhaps to feel closer to the life she carried within her, a life whose days she feared she would not be able to share. Still, someone would be there for the child: Taurell, the father. Could Joscelin have been thinking of a way to ensure the child's obedience to their father? It was, perhaps, another way of being present in her absence.

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[120] "The observance of the Sabbath on the Christian day, along with the Jewish prohibitions, may well be the unique theological contribution of the English to the Continental Reformation." (Davis, 1969: 51). Consider also that, according to Sprunger, "strict Sabbatarianism in the seventeenth century was unique to the English and Scottish people. The main practices of the Puritan Sabbath were invented, not borrowed" (Sprunger, 1982: 24).

[121] This was added by Goud (p. 97).

3.5.12 Twelve: Parents Must Be Obeyed

The commandment is clear (the first commandment of the second table, as Joscelin notes): "Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be prolonged upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." (the quotation comes from Exodus 20: 12). A child must obey his or her parents. But what might happen if the child does not? Joscelin warns that all manner of misfortunes may follow for those who disobey: "if wee dare disobey good parents theft murder adultery falsnes couetousnes are easyly found out nay I dare say if thou breakest eyther of theas comandments thou breakest all of the first and second table" (717–720, p. 98). She then turns to a classical example to instruct rather than to discourage the child.

> For an example, the story of *AEneas* shows how much it was obserued by them that receyued not the comandment from Gods own mouthe as did the Jews yet he exposed himselfe to all dangers rather then hee would forsake his father. Secondly, thou art a murtherer of thy Father whoo hauing stored vp all his ioy in thee hathe by thy disobedience; his gray head brought with sorrow to the graue; which God forbid (724-731).

Finally, there is not much difference between an adulterer and a disobedient child: "(...) and what difference shall I say there is between a disobedient child and an adulterer? The one forsakes the wife of his bosom, the other forsakes the Holy Spirit, the sweet guide of his soul" (731–734, p. 100). In case we had any doubt that this was written to encourage the child to obey the only surviving parent, Joscelin clarifies it for us at the end of the section:

> I am sure thou hast a father whoo will neuer comand thee anything contrary to the commandements of god therefore I haue no need to speake to thee how far a father ought to bee obeyed but humbly desire of god to continew him in his good desire with long life to bringe thee vp in the feare of the Lord and to giue thee a hart ready to embrace all religious learning (748-754, p. 100).

3.5.13 Thirteen: Last Advice Before Leaving

The last section remains unfinished. Yet its message could be addressed to all religions, to all believers, to all of humankind. It could serve as a universal invocation when people meet for the first time and do not yet know one another's beliefs or preferences. Perhaps Joscelin was making a final, desperate attempt to

leave behind a fundamental conclusion to her *Book of Hours*—a last farewell that could endure throughout a lifetime.

> The next duty equall to this thou must perform to all the world in generall doo to all men as thou wouldst they should doo vnto thee. This is the comandement our sauiour giues vs: loue one another by this wee shall bee known to be his if wee loue one another as hee hathe loued vs (755-759, p. 102).

The rest of this section consists of several reflections on the same theme, including the advice to love one's enemies and to forgive those who have caused harm. The final sentence is unforgettable, though it remains unfinished:

> Lastly let thy hart be kept allways in aw of this want of charyty by continuall remembringe that thou hast no form of prayr to desire forgiuenes for thy selfe if thou forgiue not others all other petitions god grants vs freely only this is conditionall he forgiue vs as wee forgiue others our Sauiour hathe taught vs no other way to desire it and in the 18 of *Matthew* he shows god will no otherwise grant it (873-879, p. 108).

Chapter 18 presents a parable in which a king forgives a servant's great debt, only to discover that this same servant refuses to forgive a fellow servant's much smaller debt. As punishment, the king sends the unforgiving servant to prison and condemns him to pay his debt in full. The parable concludes with Jesus' words: "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matthew, 18: 35).

3.6 Conclusion

Joscelin was a woman who lived on a frontier, in several senses. First, she inhabited the frontier between life and death. For those who dwell in such a liminal space, few things matter. Joscelin did not let her gender constrain her when writing a legacy for her child. It is true that she reflects some of the recurrent tropes of her time—humility, self-justification—especially at the beginning of the text. Yet she boldly, and decisively, wrote—not a brief note, but nearly a thousand lines for a deeply desired child.

Her position as an inhabitant of this ultimate frontier granted her *auctoritas* over her (short) life and her actions. The proximity of death lent her authority, but motherhood further amplified it. As in other cases, the combination of death and motherhood proved to be a powerful engine of female freedom.

Second, she stood at the frontier between the Renaissance woman and the Puritan woman. A Renaissance woman, such as Margaret Roper, is clearly an intellectual. She is educated in Latin and perhaps Italian, conversant with classical authors, and cultivated in the arts of reading and writing. The Puritan woman, by contrast, is humble; she refrains from boasting about her learning and grounds her reading almost exclusively in Scripture. She knows the Bible by heart, and her writing is devout. On which side was Joscelin? This study suggests that she was once a Renaissance woman who ultimately embraced Puritan ideals, renouncing classical learning—especially for her future daughter—in favour of Scripture and piety.

Third, she is yet another woman who leaves behind a legacy (like Dorothy Leigh, with whom she shares certain features, as previously discussed), but she is also distinct. What makes her so exceptional? Urgency. She inhabits the frontier between the woman who writes a legacy and the woman who is drowning—who has only a few hours to live. Her desperation is palpable, and unlike other female writers of legacies, she is certain of her imminent death. No other legacy-writing woman addressed her unborn child. But she did.

Finally, Joscelin occupies one more frontier: she is still a physical being, yet continually reaching into the spiritual realm, becoming, word by word, a ghost. The text, as if through a magical process, absorbs her materiality and gives her a soul. In the end, her only remaining physicality is in the text, but through it, a lasting spiritual presence is constructed.

Joscelin transcends death through love—in this case, maternal love—as Joseph Campbell once noted in reference to heroic narratives.[122] As a mother, nothing could deter her from the sacred duty of protecting and educating her child. This fusion of love and duty is perhaps what makes her text so extraordinary, so moving, and still so powerfully alive.

[122] Campbell was referring to the love that Tristan felt for Isolde, and he explained it this way: "[Tristan] says that his love is even bigger than death and pain, bigger than anything." Campbell, Joseph: *El poder del mito*. Entrevista con Bill Moyers. Ed. Capitán Swing. Madrid, 1991. Page 249.

Chapter 4

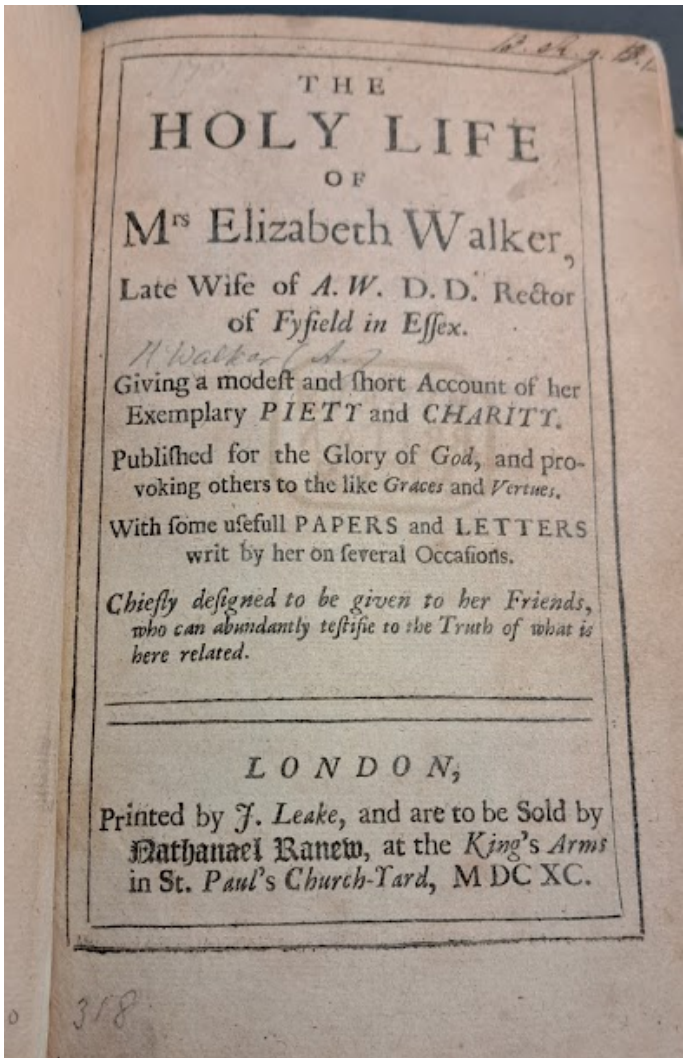
Elizabeth Walker: The Shared Legacy of Elizabeth Walker

4.1 Introduction

The life of Elizabeth Walker (1623-1690) stands as a formidable instance of English motherhood in the late seventeenth century, exemplary and almost on the verge of religious idealization. But we have to bear in mind that hers is a strongly motivated portrait, one that was written both by herself and by her husband, one that responded to a very specific ideological direction and perspective that, in the end, was not innocent or devoid of a program. While the voice of Elizabeth Walker as mother reaches us clearly through the remaining documents published after her death by her husband (Anthony Walker, The Holy Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Walker, 1690) (this is the volume we shall be discussing in the present chapter), we can be sure that she would have not been as clearly individualized, or that she would have not been allowed such space for self-expression, if her text had not performed a specific social role, even a political purpose. Thus we will dedicate this chapter to analysing the voice of Elizabeth herself, but also to seeing how she is described by her husband after her death, and how the model of family that they formed is presented. There is a special emphasis on her role and her obligations as a mother, and on her loving fulfilment of these functions, that comes across as sincere and heartfelt. But even these aspects seem to depend, in the last analysis, on her husband's desire for self-promotion within the context of the Church of England.

Let us clarify one key aspect before proceeding. What I have just written does not imply, in any way, a lack of sincerity either in Walker herself or even in her husband; the fact of making an active use of their intimacy, of publishing and making it public, was not in itself or primarily a simple act of self-promotion in the part of the husband, or need not be seen only as such. It performed this function in the end, but it was not necessarily the most important of its original motivations: the self-seeking aims that he doubtlessly had were not in contradiction with his sincerity. This is one of the aspects of protestant thought that is most difficult to

understand today: the benefit that one might (an in this case, will) obtain from one act does not involve a hypocritical stance. So, we will have to be careful and analyze the documents both of Elizabeth



THE
HOLY LIFE
OF
Mrs Elizabeth Walker,
Late Wife of *A. W.* D. D. Rector of *Fyfield in Eſſex.*
Giving a modeſt and ſhort Account of her Exemplary *PIETY* and *CHARITY.*
Publiſhed for the Glory of *God*, and provoking others to the like *Graces* and *Vertues.*
With ſome uſefull PAPERS and LETTERS writ by her on ſeveral Occaſions.
Chiefly deſigned to be given to her Friends, who can abundantly teſtifie to the Truth of what is here related.

LONDON,
Printed by *J. Leake*, and are to be Sold by Nathanael Ranew, at the *King*'s *Arms* in St. *Paul*'s *Church-Yard*, M DC XC.

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Figure 27. The first edition of *The Holy Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Walker*, 1690. Photograph taken with the kind permission of the British Library.

Walker and of her husband taking this important aspect into account, and consider seriously the implications of personal prestige that went into Anthony Walker's publication, without necessarily seeing them as the main motivation for their existence.

4.2 The Possibility of Ventriloquism

Anthony Walker is our filter for Elizabeth Walker's voice; he measures and calculates the fragments written by his wife in a way conceived by him or, more

generally, by the standards of what a good wife should be in seventeenth century England. To what an extent was her voice adapted, biased or mediated by him in order to reach the expectations of the husband, or in order to convey an image of femininity that can be used as a role model for other women? In short: is it possible for us to read confidently a book that could be biased by the voice of an affectionate husband? And if so, to what extent?

The idea of "ventriloquism" applied to some Renaissance texts was created by Elizabeth D. Harvey in her excellent study on Renaissance texts, which, even though they were authored by male authors, were "voiced by female characters in a way that seems either to erase the gender of the authorial voice or to thematize the transvestism of this process" (Harvey, 1992: 1). She calls this phenomenon "transvestite ventriloquism", in the belief that "accentuates the issues of gender, voice, and authorial property in ways that illuminate both Renaissance conceptions of language and their relation to the gendered subject, and also twentieth-century notions of the author" (Harvey, 1992: 1). Essentially, the author focuses on post-modernist theories originated in Foucault and stresses the gender issues in the transformation ("genderization") of a male voice into a woman's, or the opposite, the "feminization" of a male author's via his characters in poetry or plays. It is not oriented to actual constructions of selfhood in first-person texts (if such a paradox is accepted) of femininity, like the ones that are studied in our thesis. Harvey nonetheless offers an alluring definition of intertextuality, referring to the network of possible origins of references texts in the Renaissance: "intertextuality focuses on utterances whose possible sources are illusory points of origin, or whose origins are either infinitely regressive or at least multiple, so that they cannot be identified as belonging either solely to a particular author or even to a particular historical moment" (Harvey, 1992: 10). Here Harvey is referring to the potential multiplicity of authors as the original point of commonplace humanistic references, which may be actually untraceable or have different origins: they are the various points of reference of the *studia humanitatis*. As we have seen in the case of Grymeston, it was not necessary to give a clear account of the sources in books of literary commonplaces or in *Florilegia* of thoughts (anthologies). But in the case of Walker the situation is very different: it is the case of a husband that gives us a large anthology of his own wife's thoughts and an account of her life, so that her writing and voice are mediated by him and encased within his own text.

What was the purpose of giving voice to a woman? Mediation of that kind is always motivated by a moral purpose: there is a need of edification and exemplarity, to be heard and known by a public beyond the family and relatives. There is textual mediation of this

kind in other volumes published in that period: male authors such as Arnold Boate in 1651[123] and Philipp Stubbes in 1615[124] acted in the same way in presenting the life of their deceased wives to the world, but their books lack the dialogue, the sense of conversational character between husband and wife, that Anthony Walker's book has. Different voices inhabit these texts, but they all pursue one final objective: the moral edification and improvement of the readers. We can add another, more personal reason to these: the books may be written to mitigate pain, in search of some sort of consolation. Philip Stubbes declared at the beginning of his volume, remembering his late wife:

> Having perpetually before my eyes the aymable and commendable qualities of my most lovelie and most beloved consort, of vvhom it pleased God latelie to deprive me in the prime of her age (to my unspeakable grief, and irreparable discomfort) and having found some consolation in reducing in vvriting part of vvhat my memorie did suggest unto me of her, for to serve me insteed of a pourtrait, upon vvhich I might often passe my vieuvv, thereby in some sort to mitigate the excesse of my tormenting sadnes (…) (Stubbes, 1615: A2v).

These three men wrote their respective books after the decease of their wives, and the three of them intended their work to offer an example to others, as well as, more privately, to be of some comfort in their distress and bereavement. Were they describing a perfect ideal that was culturally induced? Were they hiding the bitterness that may perhaps have existed in their marriages, in order to impersonate the righteous model of an idealistic household? The truth is, as always, more complex than this. Personal problems and the difficulties that inevitably arise in a marriage were superseded by the need to give voice to a cultural ideal that could be equally applied to society at large. To that extent, marriage seems to have worked for Stubbes, Boate, and Walker. In a way that was very representative of the English Reformation, they wanted to share their knowledge on the matter, giving voice to their spouses and making room for their voices, sometimes impersonating them and describing vividly how they acted in life.

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[123] The title is in itself interesting. Boate, Arnold: *The character of a trvlie vertvovs and piovs woman, as it hlad been acted by mistris Margaret Dungan (wife to doctor Arnold Boate) in the constant course of her whola life, which she finished at Paris 17 Aprilis 1651*. Paris, 1651.

[124] Stubbes, Philippe: *A Christall glass for Christian women*. London, 1615. It went through twenty-two editions from 1591 to 1640 (*Short Title Catalogue of English Books 1475-1640*. Volume 2. BL. London, 1976), which meant a complete success for the author.

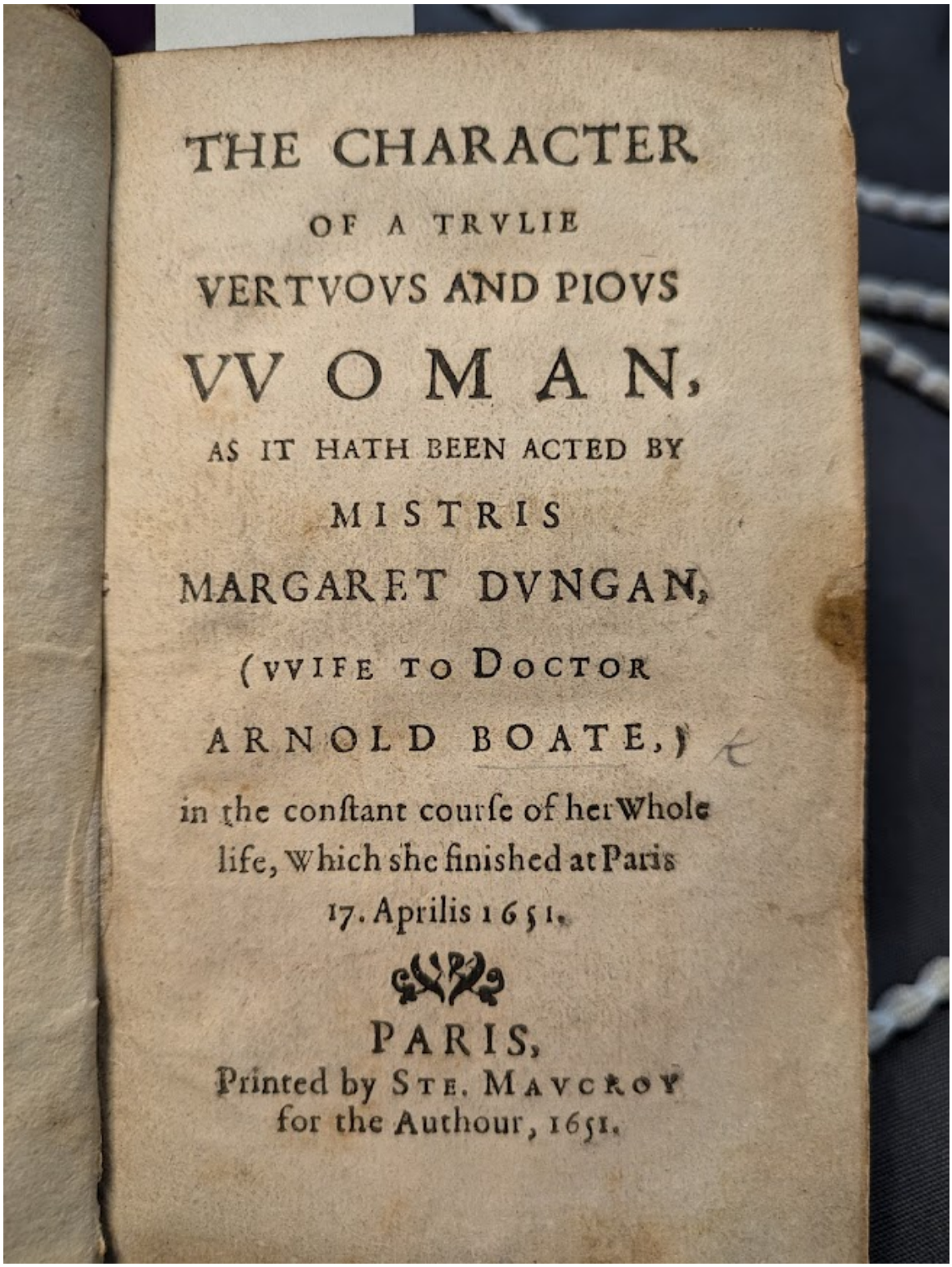
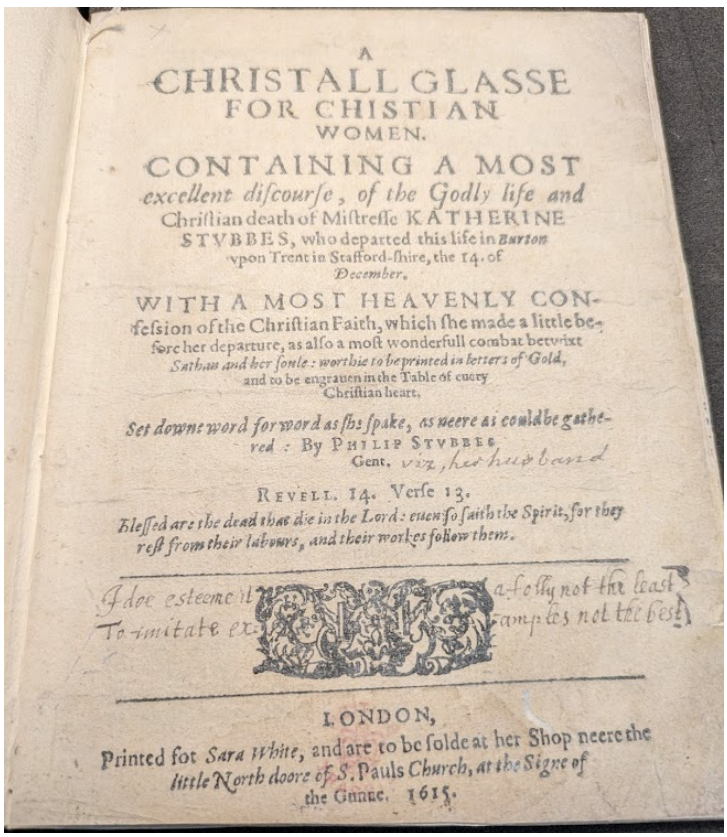

THE CHARACTER
OF A TRVLIE
VERTVOVS AND PIOVS
VV O M A N,
AS IT HATH BEEN ACTED BY
MISTRIS
MARGARET DVNGAN,
(VVIFE TO DOCTOR
ARNOLD BOATE,)
in the conſtant courſe of her Whole
life, Which ſhe finished at Paris
17. Aprilis 1651.
PARIS,
Printed by STE. MAVCROY
for the Authour, 1651.

Figure 28. Front page of Arnold Boate's book, *The Character of a Trvlie, Virtuous and Piovs Woman* (1651); it was printed in Paris, as we can see. It is a good example of the popularity of laudatory texts in honour of deceased wives in the seventeenth century. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library..

Figure 29. Philippe Stubbes's *A Christall Glass for Christian Women* (1615) was a thin, portable, and accessible book: perhaps that was one of the reasons for its success. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.



A
CHRISTALL GLASSE
FOR CHISTIAN
WOMEN.
CONTAINING A MOST
excellent discourse, of the Godly life and
Christian death of Mistresse KATHERINE
STVBBES, who departed this life in Burton
vpon Trent in Stafford-shire, the 14. of
December.
WITH A MOST HEAVENLY CON-
fession of the Christian Faith, which she made a little be-
fore her departure, as also a most wonderfull combat betwixt
Sathan and her soule: worthie to be printed in letters of Gold,
and to be engraven in the Table of euery
Christian heart.
Set downe word for word as she spake, as neere as could be gathe-
red: By PHILIP STVBBES
Gent. viz, her husband
REVELL. 14. Verse 13.
Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord: euen so saith the Spirit, for they
rest from their labours, and their workes follow them.
I doe esteeme it a folly not the least
To imitate examples not the best
LONDON,
Printed for Sara White, and are to be solde at her Shop neere the
little North doore of S. Pauls Church, at the Signe of
the Gunne. 1615.

Figure 30. Front page of Philip Stubbes's treatise (1615). The interesting fact here is the handwritten annotation, that says: "I doe esteeme it a folly not the least, to imitate examples not the best". Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

Why would Stubbes place his own ideals of Christianity, behaviour and morals in the lips of a dying spouse, when he could have done it without her, given the already social acknowledgement and reputation he had already won over the years?[125] Or why would Boates, who was a famous doctor, do likewise? Or could

[125] Stubbes had studied in Cambridge and Oxford. Born in 1555, and died in 1610, he had already written a well-recognized book against the abuses in England (alcohol, sex out of marriage,

it be, perhaps, that these affection and admiration could be sincere? To some extent, we have to admit that a degree of truthfulness was culturally involved here. Deference, praise and even pride were strong motivations for these authors, they publicly showed enough humility (a main virtue of the true Protestant) to confess their appreciation towards their respective wives. In other words, it was a public issue that enhanced their already remarkable reputation.

The case of Anthony Walker is different. The fact of showing such public respect and love as he does for his deceased wife could be suspicious, but I believe that his work is a unique and true proof of complete admiration. Their individual styles are to a certain extent differentiated: the wife's voice, as we shall see immediately, is more restrained, frugal and dull, while the husband's is more firmly biblical, oratorical and passionate. In the whole work, the construction of Anthony's own social self and even the building of his reputation (external and public) is firmly supported by the wife, who is deceased already. Was his wife's voice hijacked to become a tool to his prestige? No. Rather, because of the specific social construction of the protestant self, her text and its purpose coincided largely with Anthony's own desires: both of them participated, as a husband and wife, in the construction of a shared intimacy, and that intimacy had an immediate social projection. That projection was helped by the publication of the book itself, to the detailed analysis of which we shall now turn.

Figure 31. In this graphic, we can observe the textual contribution to the book of both husband and wife. You can see the complete tables in Appendix 2. Graphic elaborated by the author.

games…etc.): *The Anatomie of Abuses*, published in 1583. See the entry for "Stubbs, Philip", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

4.3 A Life and a Book

Elizabeth Walker was born in London in 1623 (on a Thursday, 12th of July, as she writes in her memories, p. 9). She was the daughter of a druggist, but if we have come to know her it is because of the pride her husband felt for her. She got married to Anthony Walker on the 23rd of July in 1650, at the age of 27; on the very same year of 1650 Anthony Walker was made rector of Fyfield, in Essex. Before that, and in an act that would to become his most important intellectual contribution to the political life of the seventeenth century, Anthony apparently contributed to the collectively composed *Eikon Basiliké, or the Portraicture of His Sacred Majesty in his Solitude and Sufferings* (1649)[126], a work that did much to establish the reputation of righteousness, and even possible sainthood, for the imprisoned Charles I.[127] Even though Anthony Walker undoubtingly and unflinchingly supported the legitimacy of the crown during the years of the Civil War, he still had some leanings towards puritanism, especially in matters of everyday life, as we shall see later on.

The great problem for the Walkers was, precisely, their offspring, or rather their difficulties in having it and keeping it alive. Here the examples on early modern pregnancy and the reality of death and loss, that I have given in the first chapter of this thesis, seem to make themselves present in the text and the life of the Walkers. Elizabeth gave birth to six sons and five daughters, who, as we shall see in detail in the following pages, kept dying in infancy: only one daughter eventually reached adulthood, and she also died while giving birth to one boy. Elizabeth's only descendant was her grandson Johnny, to whom she will address one of her last letters (which, by its length, it can be considered a legacy). Elizabet died on the 23rd of February of 1690, as her husband Anthony explains.[128] Her

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[126] The book is complete on the Internet: N.A. *Eikon Basiliké. The Portraicture of his sacred Majestie in his solitudes and sufferings*. In R.M., 1648. https://tinyurl.com/yr4fakt7. The participation of Anthony Walker in said book can be found here: Simon Knott, Simon. "St Nicholas, Fyfield". *The Churches of Essex*. 2021. http://www.simonknott.co.uk/essexchurches/fyfield.htm. Accessed on 17 June 2023. However, it is the only source in which said information appears.

[127] "The book's portrayal of Charles as a moderate, peace-loving ruler transformed opinion of his execution so that it came to be viewed by many as an act of martyrdom". N.A. "Eikon Basilike: The Portraicture of his sacred Majestie in his solitudes and sufferings". Royal Collection Trust, London. https://tinyurl.com/yny3dgk4. Accessed on 15 July 2025. "From all accounts, the book appeared on the streets the day of the kings execution. It presents itself as the kings own meditations on the events of the civil wars, providing readers with a view of the private life of a formal public figure". Skerpan-Wheleer, Elizabeth. "The First 'Royal': Charles I as Celebrity." PMLA, vol. 126, no. 4, 2011, pp. 912–34. Page 913.

[128] "I am now arrived at my Mournfull Heavy Loss, and her much waited for, and desired Gain, and great Advantage, her much bewailed Death, to prepare for which had been her daily work for many Years, which happened February the 23d, this present Year 1690." (Walker: 210).

husband followed her son: in 1692 (Anselment, 2019: 571). The will of Anthony Walker, written in 1692, is available in the National Archives of London: in that will, he appears to be quite compassionate with the poor children of the parish, and he even donated to charity the rent for a 56-acre land that he owned in the parish of High Ongar.

Two years before passing away, in 1690, he was made coadjutor of Saint Mary Aldermanby, in London. That was the same year of the publication of her wife's diaries. The publication of a dead wife's writings by her widower was quite unusual, although there were some exceptions, like Humphrey Gunter's *A profitable Memoriall of the conversion, life and death of Mrs. Mary Gunter* (1622)[129] or Samuel Clarke's *A looking glass for good women to dress themselves by; held forth in the life and death of Mrs. Catherine Clarke* (London, 1677). These diaries and private writings have been studied by only a few scholars (Carlson, 2000; Anselment, 2019). In the specific case of Elizabeth Walker, the matters of publication and its meaning has been partially addressed by Raymond A. Anselment (Anselment, 2019). Other relevant authors, like Patricia Crawford (1993, 1998), Susan C. Staub (2002) or Antonia Fraser (1984) have used it as an example for the daily lives of English women.

What makes this woman relevant, apart our desire to come close and understanding how an English mother mother in the seventeenth century faced the hardships of life, is her unusual and remarkable lack of complaint. God's will had to be observed, even when it was painful or (apparently) unfair. On the other hand, the lives of any family were woven by God, and there was a sense of a clear destiny and divine purpose that affected every detail of their daily existence. The social and spiritual importance of a legacy in the form of writing is the third point; Walker's work was done for future generations to come (her surviving children especially, but not only), or for general Christians who felt lost and in need of a virtuous example to follow. Her husband seems to be initially very clear in this particular point: if he bothers transcribing his wife's writings is because, first and foremost, he felt proud of her, he really considered her as an example to follow that could be useful for other (perhaps lost) people. The most important fact is precisely this affection, which was not common then, of a husband for her wife. He is delicate

[129] For some more information on the wife (although there is not much): N.A: "Mary Gunter". *UC Press e-books collection*. University of California Press. https://publishing.cdlib.org/ucpressebooks/view?docId=ft7m3nb4n1&chunk.id=doe10076&toc.depth=100&toc.id=doe9778&brand=ucpress . Accessed on 15th July 2025.

and affectionate to her in his writing, in a very remarkable way; though this not necessarily exclude other motivations, as we will see.

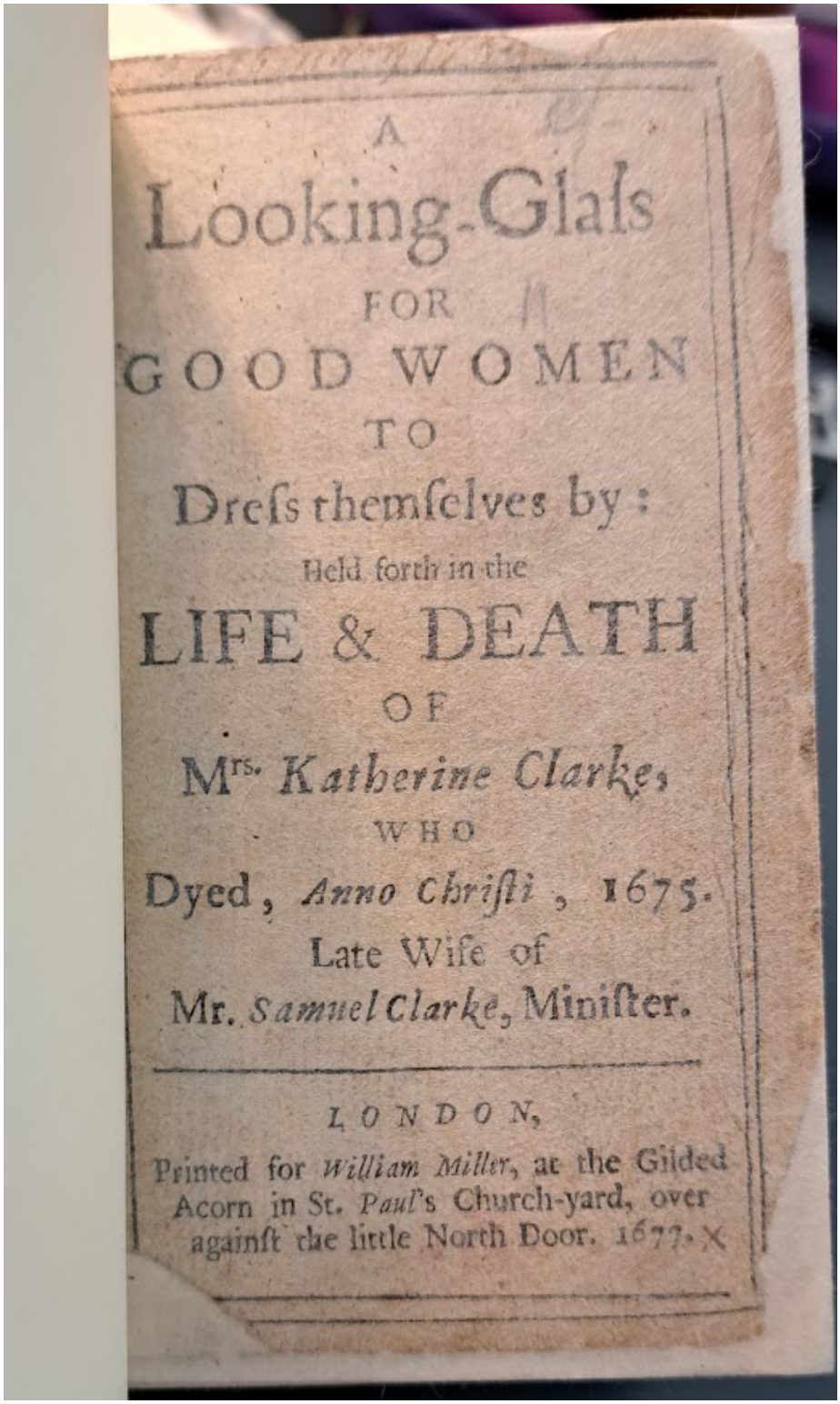
A
Looking-Glaſs
FOR
GOOD WOMEN
TO
Dreſs themſelves by:
Held forth in the
LIFE & DEATH
OF
Mrs. Katherine Clarke,
WHO
Dyed, Anno Chriſti, 1675.
Late Wife of
Mr. Samuel Clarke, Miniſter.
LONDON,
Printed for William Miller, at the Gilded Acorn in St. Paul's Church-yard, over againſt the little North Door. 1677.

Figure 32. Front page of Samuel Clarke's treatise, *A Looking-Glass for Good Women* (1677). Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

4.4 The Origins—Initial Editorial Interventions into Elizabeth Walker's Text

At the very beginning of the 1690 text, Anthony clears up that he is not putting words in her wife's mouth: what is going to be published is exactly what she wrote, although the selection and correction (except for one final letter, completely written by Elizabeth, without any apparent intervention by the husband) is his. The reason why he decided to publish these intimate documents is "for *solid, experienced Christians* who desire to *exercise themselves unto Godliness"* (Walker, 1690: A3v). Elizabeth made her husband promise that he would not take a look at her papers as long as she was alive, and the husband declares the he fulfilled this promise. So there is an element of individual intimacy that is fully considered and seemingly respected by Anthony Walker: he will respect Elizabeth's words, and these were apparently written in her own privacy. The important factor is that Elizabeth wrote on her own, and that Anthony did not know her writings during her life. Irrespective of whether he did so or not, the key factor is the importance that is given here to the female voice speaking on her own, and how that is fully validated. An entire culture of privacy (essential to Protentantism) is assumed here: it is the sincerity of her text when writing alone, in solitary meditation, that is understood as being valuable.

At the beginning of her own text, Elizabeth Walker gives a complete detail of the breed and family of her husband, and also tells about his strong endeavours until getting to his post in Fyfield, Essex. She goes on giving specific details about her own life:

> I was Born at London, in Bucklersbury, on Thursday the 12th. of July, in the Year of our Lord 1623, and baptized the 20th. Day of the same Month. The Lord vouchsafing me a reception into the visible Church of Jesus Christ, when he most justly might have suffered no Eye to pity me, but have cast me out, to the loathing of my Person, in my original Defilement, and Stains of my sinful Nature. But to my first admittance, good Lord, enable me to ascend, that being a Member of thy Church militant here on Earth, I may attain to be one of thy Church triumphant in Heaven (Walker, 1690: 9).

The notion of the "church militant" was as well an essential one within Protestantism, and the key notion of baptism is also fundamental to conscientious believers. The moment of baptism is the one in which each individual is

incorporated into the general community of Christians; this also is the first precondition for the "ascension" that will eventually, at the moment of death, bring the individual into the celestial kingdom:…"that…I may attain to be one of thy Church triumphant in Heaven". Note the balancing of the two terms, "militant" and "triumphant", both of them characterizing the Church, but one referring to its state on earth, and another to its final, definitive form, that will last for eternity.

It is here, at the beginning of the text, that her husband begins his editorial task. That task initially consists simply in cutting part of his wife's writing, saying that they are fully satisfying for him to read, but that they could bore some of the readers.[130] Those pages are related to several accidents that Elizabeth suffered in her childhood but ended without further damage, for which Elizabeth gives thanks to God. At this initial point, we may also remark how Anthony is using key incidents in her early life to praise her. For example, when she confesses a lie told to her father when she was a teenager, and the remorse she felt afterwards, her husband comments:

> The abhorrency she had of this fault was so great, that I firmly believe she never know|ingly spake an untruth after to her dying day. So gracious, faithfull and able is our good God to bring Good out of Evil, and by setting home the smart of one Sin, to prevent the committing of the like for ever after (Walker, 1690: 15).

Elizabeth deeply appreciated the fondness of her father, because during the Civil War, he sent her to Ipswich to protect her. Then she had several opportunities to get married, and several suitors, but as she herself put it, "*God's goodness* (was) *reserving for me my best Choice"* (Walker, 1690: 156). In her own frame of mind, everything was calculated by God before hand, and what happened in fact was needed to happen. And in this aspect, both husband and wife appear to be of the same mind, unswervingly; both of them believe equally in providence and its key role in human affairs: there is a sense of destiny, of fate, in every page.

4.5 A Spirit in Distress: The Experience of Melancholy

A key turning point is reached early in the text, when Anthony begins to address a central matter, and one that we have met before in this thesis; this is the subject of melancholy (or, as we would call it, serious depression) that, as we are seeing, was

[130] Many excerpts of the book have been removed: see Appendix 2 for more information. Sometimes Anthony Walker would explain his alterations by saying similar words to these: "But I must pass over a great many things for brevity" (Walker:13).

far from unusual among mothers of the seventeenth century. He states that her fight against the dejection in her spirit was strong, but that it involved difficult situations, even going so far as to involve demonic temptations. The effects of that state involved a continued and extreme sense that put her in a state of continued sadness, and which is even identified with a serious danger to her soul's salvation:

> As 'tis usually said, a Storm makes a Mariner, a Battle a Soldier, and Temptation makes a Christian. She was certainly an excellent Christian; and to render her such, she was long buffeted with horrid satanical Suggestions, and blasphemous Temptations; which not only made her go mourning all the day long, but many Months and Years; and not only those fiery and envenomed Darts drank up her Spirits, but brought her Life to the gates of the Grave, and her distressed Soul to the gates of Hell (Walker, 1690: 17).

Anthony also adds that the reason he is going to include the fragments explaining the struggle that his wife went through is to help others who could be suffering from the very same condition. But how does Elizabeth herself explain this situation on her own words? She indeed describes with detail what seems to be a period of profound despair and sadness. At this point, one specific anecdote stands out, marking the beginning of this dark period. In one occasion, She was just about to pray when she made a gesture (which itself is unspecified) which seemed to call on dark forces which led on to blasphemous thoughts, and thus she was led into a temptation:

> I going to Prayer, according to my usual custom, before I kneeled down, by an outward action of my Hand, which was in itself very innocent, and at that time not irreverent, farther than the Devil made it so, by casting a blasphemous suggestion into my mind, which looked very hideously upon me: But, notwithstanding, I prayed without farther molestation at that time. I cannot remember what notice I took of the Temptation in my Prayer; but when I had ended my Prayer, my Enemy fiercely assaulted me: I could neither see anything, nor hear, or doe any thing, but evil Motions were forced into my mind; and though I besought the Lord, *more than thrice,* I could not be free from that affliction (Walker, 1690: 18).

What had been the specific gesture that the young Elizabeth did unwittingly with her hand, and what was the apparently "blasphemous suggestion" that it immediately awakened in her unquiet mind? The text, mysteriously, does not

specify it at all. Yet she describes how she started to feel sick and deeply afflicted; her father even called for a physician, Dr. Bathurst, who firmly diagnosed her with melancholy (Walker, 1690: 20). And here we reach the point where the medical and religious discourses seem to converge, even to flow into each other in Elizabeth Walker's text. We can remember here how Robert Burton's long treatise on the subject, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), had been a kind of best seller in to the seventeenth century, and while it had led to the identification of the main symptoms of the malady, it certainly was not incompatible with religious faith, and even less with a specifically protestant viewpoint. The main symptomatology of melancholy had been identified by Burton in the following way:

> Anguish, dulness, heaviness and vexation of spirit, any ways opposite to pleasure, mirth, joy, delight, causing forwardness in us, or a dislike. In which equivocal and improper sense, we call it melancholy, that is dull, sad, sour, lumpish, ill-disposed, solitary, any way moved, or displeased. And from these melancholy dispositions no man living is free, no Stoic, none so wise, none so happy, none so patient, so generous, so godly, so divine, that can vindicate himself; so well-composed, but more or less, some time or other, he feels the smart of it (Burton, 1621: 69).

Robert Burton's text is more oriented to the secular world; it offers a series of characteristics that may easily make us think of familiar melancholy characters in the literature of that century (prince Hamlet or Antonio from *The Merchant of Venice*). Interestingly, he clarifies that there is "no man living" that can escape from it, and that, "some time or other" every person might in spite of their good education or culture, "feel the smart of it". Exactly this is what occurred to the young Elizabeth: sadness, dullness, the impossibility of feeling happy or satisfied. To which is superposed, in a logical progression of thought, the notion of temptation and the unequal fight with the devil, which are typical interpretations of these states in the minds of seventeenth-century believers. The fact that this psychological state almost led her "to the gates of the grave", as we have seen her husband put it above, only confirms the diagnosis reached by dr. Bathurst years earlier: "Dejectedness and Melancholy". It is true that, at this point, Elizabeth was still a very young woman, and still had not had to face the pain of giving birth or of seeing her children die; much later in her life, she referred again explicitly to these supposed attacks of the devil. That would be the case, for instance, in the occasion of the death of her married daughter, Margaret Cox: "Satan taking advantage of my melancholy Disposition, growing upon me after the Death of my

dearly beloved Child, Mrs. *Margaret Cox*, renewed these Assaults"… (Walker, 1690: 116). The language that her husband would use in relation to these episodes would, unvaryingly, refer to them as "temptations" until the end of her life, thus confirming the religious perspective through which psychological problems were understood. We shall have more to say on this matter later on.

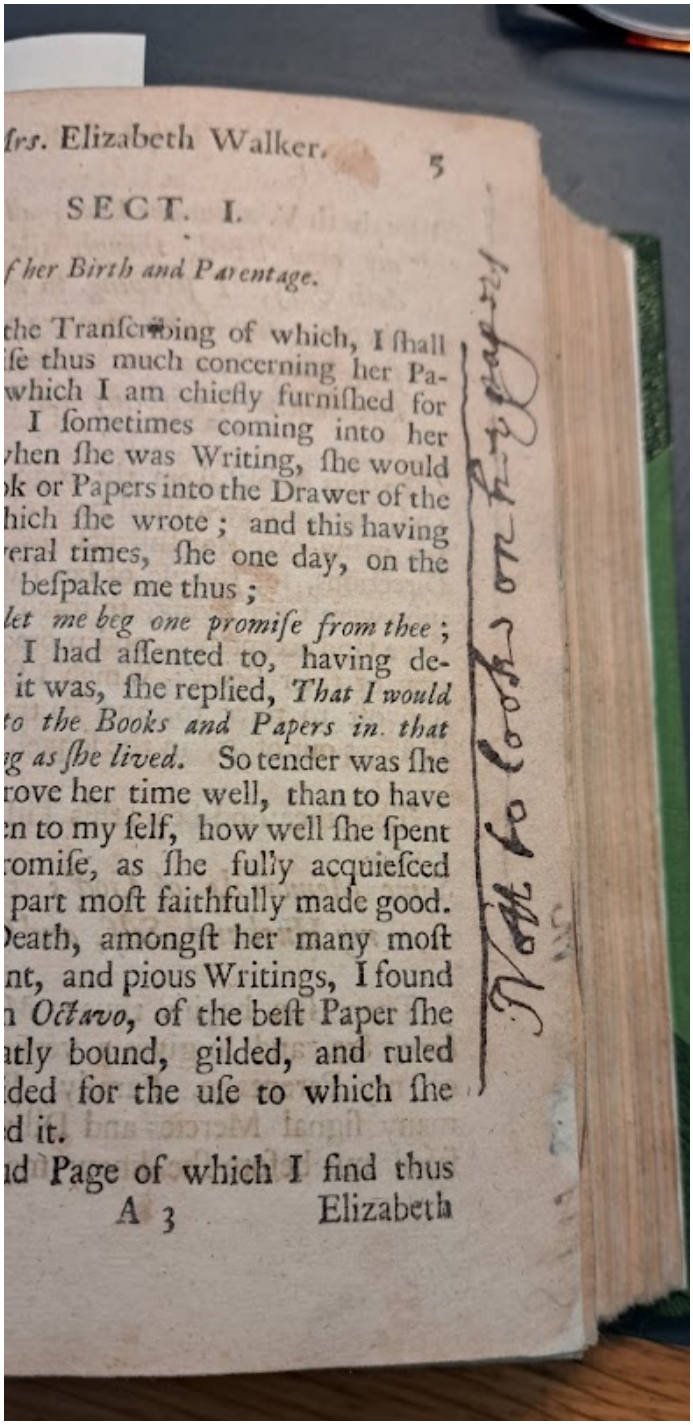

Figure 33. "Not to look on her papers": a seventeenth-century reader annotated the margins of the book. Mr. Walker is explaining here what his wife had commanded regarding her documents and her work. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

Let us return now, however, to the afflictions she suffered in her youth, before the time of her marriage. The dejected Elizabeth was eventually sent to the house of the minister of Banston, in Essex, whose name was Beadle. The minister and his wife helped her deeply, but she was still discomforted for the following months:

> For half a Year I do not know that I slept: if I did it was very little; and yet I did not want either sleep or health. Blessed be God for his sustaining and supporting Arm. If I desired any thing that was grateful to my Appetite, when it was brought me I durst not make use of it, because I thought it to be the satisfaction of a base sensual Appetite. I did eat very sparingly, which, with my much weeping, occasioned me some little inconvenience, which became habitual (Walker, 1690: 23).

Elizabeth could not eat or sleep, and it took her a long time to recover. It is breathtaking to understand that even in an apparently tranquil existence, where immediate stress was almost non-existing, depression and sadness were also strongly present; in her case, however, the cure for her situation must be attributed to God and to his beneficial influence. The text thus considers the medical discourse of its period and integrates it entirely, while seamlessly superposing to it the religious perspective of Protestantism.

Finally, when she had been living with the minister's family for some months, she was introduced to Anthony Walker, who would become her future husband. Two months later, she came back home, feeling a little bit more in peace than she was when she left. And this leads us to the next, and fundamental, turning point in her life.

4.6 An Exemplary Protestant Marriage

When Elizabeth returned from Mr. Beadle's house, after six months of retirement, young Anthony Walker paid her some visits in her family's house for consolation. The visits became more and frequent, until the two were engaged, with the approval of their family and friend; they finally got married on the 23rd of July, 1650 (Walker, 1690: 27). Elizabeth clearly recollects that there were some clouds in the sky, but she tried to accept them, thinking it did not matter "if the Sun of Righteousness shine through them upon us". Then, almost as a kind of divine sign, the sky became shiny and cloudless: Elizabeth, seeing the incident almost as an allegory, understood that in the acceptance of God's will there would be liberation and comfort in front of the sufferings of life. This little meteorological incident is

indicative of the frame of mind with which she tended to approach every unpleasant situation though her life, and quite representative, too, of the Reformed mentality in the environment of the English church –and therefore, away from all political and religious heterodoxies- of the seventeenth century.

At this point –significantly- the husband interrupts his narration, in order to gives us his particular view of marriage. He recalls two coincidences that were taken by him as a good sign from God. The first time he was visiting his future father-in-law, there was a Bible on a desk; he opened it and the first verse that his eyes fell upon was "*Prov.* 19. 14. *House and Riches are Inheritance of Fathers, and a prudent Wife is an inheritance from the Lord"*. The second one happened when he was just about to buy their marriage rings; the first ring that was offered to him had this verse on it: *Joined in one by Christ alone*: he took it and did not look for any other and, curiously, it fit her finger perfectly well. So for Mr. Walker there was a clear path designed by God only, and they were following it in perfect harmony as husband and wife (Walker, 1690: 28); the concept strongly points at predestination without ever clearly stating it. In this constant suggestion, which does not openly present itself as a certainty, we can see the doctrinal ambiguity that at this time characterized the Church of England. And coming back to the remembrance of these clouds which (both physically and allegorically) were present at the day of their marriage, he writes:

> I am so far from putting any great stress on such little matters, that I can say with the Psalmist, *I hate those who hold on superstitious vanities;* yet let me with due thankfulness remark not the *effect,* but *event* and *consequent*. Our whole married Estate *was like the light of the morning when the Sun rises, even a morning without Clouds, and as clear shining after Rain*. And if ever Man was blest with a prudent Wife, I owe the deepest acknowledgments to him that gave me that choice Mercy (Walker, 1690: 29).

On page 31, Antony reminds the readers that he has not forgotten his intial desire in presenting the writings of his wife: to present Elizabeth's life as an example of a virtuous life, a role model for women. He tries to summarize her life in the most complimenting sentences. "In a word, her life was to live Holily, that she might die Happily" (Walker, 1690: p. 31). Anthony once more offers a sentence representative of his style, balancing contrary verbs and adverbs in order to offer what for him is not a contradiction at all: a life lived virtuously that would lead to a blessed death, physical termination not closing that life, but rather crowning it. But let us notice that this pleasant, gently paradoxical style was not only the

prerogative of Anthony, but also occasionally of Elizabeth herself. We may, for instance, remark one interesting conversation between them (it is not clear in the text at which point in time it occurred): once, when she asked him for the reasons why he loved her, and he started speaking about the importance of consciousness, she stopped him right away, arguing that duty has nothing to do with love, or it should not have anything to do with love:

> And once when I was adding the reasons of my Love, and began first for Conscience, she stopped me e'er I could proceed, as she was very quick: "Ah my Dear, I allow Conscience to be an excellent Principle in all we doe, but like it worst in Conjugal Affection. I would have thee love me, not because thou must, but because thou wilt, not as a duty, but delight, we are prone to reluctate against what's imposed, but take Pleasure in what we

Let us observe how Elizabeth is witty enough (Anthony soon qualifies that, and makes her "*innocently* witty", so as not to confuse her natural intelligence with any form of pride) to make remarks that are, at the same time, perfectly orthodox in their Protestantism (favouring personal will over all other matters in the subject of marriage) and instantly memorable in themselves. So, it seems here that both voices, the husband's and the wife's, seem to be entirely at one in their language and in their mentality and ideology. They certainly seem, therefore, to speak a common language end even occasionally to have the same style; but that unity in style only underscores their joint belief in exemplifying with their lives their commitment to a Christian reformed marriage.

4.7 How She Spent Her Days: The Concept of Time

In this brief section we will have to rely on Anthony Walker's authority entirely; for, even though Elizabeth returns again and again to her beliefs and her faith and reliance on God, it was left to her husband to specify the ways in which she lived her faith daily and administered it through specific everyday practices. He shows clearly, and quite convincingly, how her daily life was coloured by her devotional prayer.

Tellingly, Anthony recalls how her earlier melancholy came to stand for her as a constant reminder of the need to pray constantly, and a dire warning that devotion would act as a defence and bulwark against mind distress. Her prayers began in the early morning, since she seemingly needed only a few hours of rest: "She always rose early, and lived with the least sleep I ever knew, or heard of any.

Her long and frequent weeping, and sleepless months in the Agonies of her Temptation, had made it easier to her to be satisfied with little Rest" (Walker, 1690: 33). Sometimes the husband tried to make her sleep some more, but she always rejected the idea because "*my Family-Employment and Inspection requires my care and attendance*" (Walker, 1690: 33). In a representative protestant manner, the fears of dejection or inner sadness are turned to a practical purpose: her duty as a mother, the care of the home, are the best way to remain active and to answer any fears. Little rest and constant employment are a way of confronting any distress, and in fact past experiences of sadness are turned to active use, since her "little rest" itself comes directly from her early difficulties to sleep.

After waking up around four in the morning, she started to pray and she did so for at least two hours; she did this in her private room, and she kindled her own fire without calling a servant. At six the servants were up, and they joined her to read or hear part of the Bible, and then Elizabeth told them what to do for the rest of the day. After that she would start working and directing the servants about how to set the table for everybody; she would then go and put on some suitable clothes, then read or work with her needle. She spent the day working and then they had dinner, the only meal she would take; she only used to accompany it with a glass of wine or cider. In the afternoon (it seems our concept of "lunch" is understood though the term "dinner" in the text) she would visit sick neighbours and prepare medicines for the family or for poor or sick people, and "for the rest, work with her Needle, read good Books, and order Family concerns, but chiefly the Education of her Children, of which more fully afterwards" (Walker, 1690: 35). At five she would retire to her private devotions or prayers, and at some point in the evening that, she would bring the children with her to the rooms of the father, in order to pray all together as a family, at least once in the day.

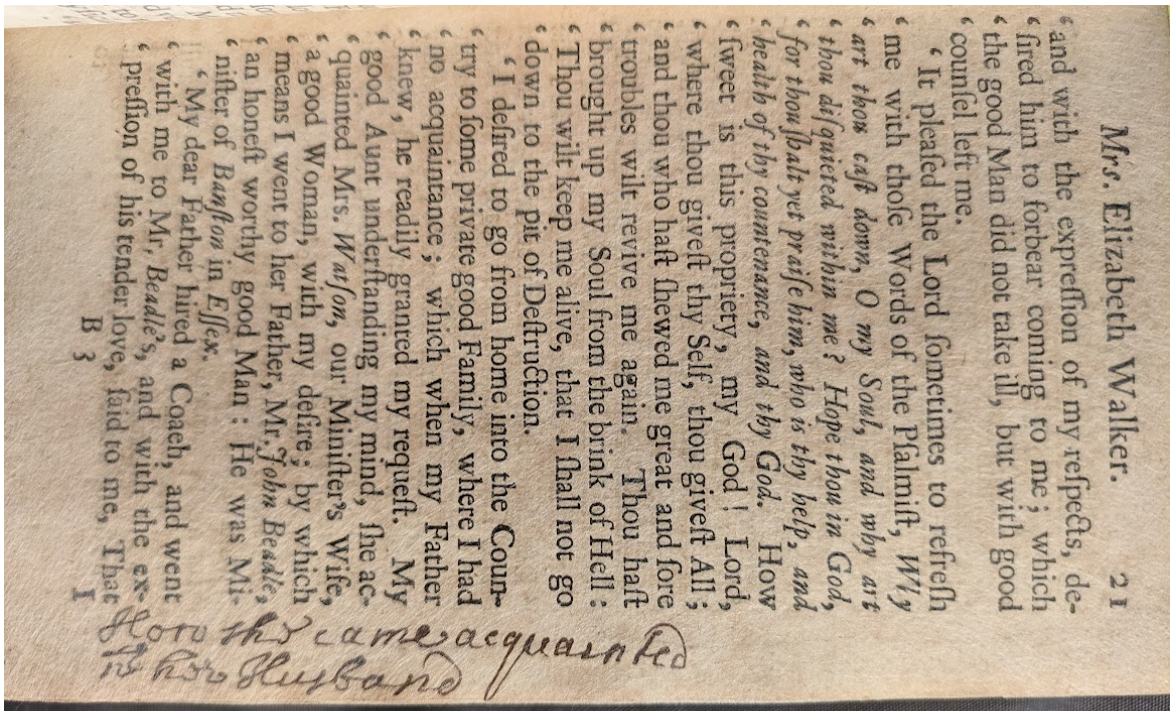

Figure 34. "How she became acquainted with her husband". This was an event that attracted the attention of (presumably) the same seventeenth-century reader as in figure 33. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

At the end of the day, Elizabeth would eat a piece of white bread with a draught of beer and would pay his husband a visit, commenting small matters; after that, and for an hour, she would catechize the servants and teach them how to read and write. And, according to her husband, no matter how ignorant the servant was, all of them left the house knowing how to read and write and the Catechism (Walker, 1690: 40). And then they had a Family Prayer, after which Elizabeth went to bed. Even then, while she was undressing, one of her maids (one who needed to practice her reading more) would read to her another passage from the Bible. Finally, after praying a little bit more (petitions for protection from the sins, temptations, and dangers of the night), Elizabeth was ready to rest (Walker, 1690: 41). Anthony goes on to annotate in detail how Mrs. Walker spent her week, depending on the days of which there were different things to do. Throughout, there is an interesting call for sharing prayers with all the family: these reunions seem to have assumed the importance that was given one century before to the Catholic masses, and to some extent they seem to have acquired a similar importance.

We can thus observe that a sense of counting time and making the most of it begins to materialise in the pages: time thus begins to be measurable, ever-present and even quantifiable. Not only that: it seems that this sense of time is deeply attuned to the inner rhythms of the family (their daily times for meals, for mutual

visits, their joint prayers), and that they attain significance by being counted, registered and put in their adequate place in the day, and in turn given their adequate place in the week. Time is not a mere succession of events: it corresponds to the correct placing of daily activities in their correct order, and to sense the correctness of that order by noting its efficiency. Time becomes something usable, not only adequate for inhabiting it, but fit to be counted and put to practical use. We are here in the exact opposite of the understanding of time by the Catholic mystics, that can be meaningful in its open extension: here, on the contrary, it is the very measurability of time that becomes significant.

To a certain extent, also, this is a productive sense of time: the hours are being used, and the extent of their usefulness generates, in itself, a sense of order and proportion. This is as valid for the family as it is for the individual: the disposition of the adequate times for each activity gives a sense of neatness and of correct order to the group, to Elizabeth (the main subject of observation here) and to Anthony (who notes it down). There are thus three levels of the family, and the use that is made of time is meaningful for each of them. We can see Anthony as fulfilling his position as head of the family, among other things, precisely by becoming the precise writer of how time is used among them; and, as a husband, he fulfills the exact same function. His noting down the distribution of time by Elizabeth seems to give an order and a purpose to each of her acts, for all the duration of their life together. The head of the family is, at the same time, the person who notes the sequencing of the time of the others.

We can see the same thing occurring at other moments in his edition of her wife's text. For instance, in the passages concerning their joint visits to take the waters in Tunbridge Wells in Kent (something they did in repeated occasions), Elizabeth's activities during the day are also patiently noted. What Anthony highlights about these vacations is that she turned them into a religious activity; she went there "as to a place of Privacy and Retirement, to be vacant to God, and her Spiritual Concernments" (Walker, 1690: 136). Let us observe how the words are carefully chosen: the value of "privacy and retirement" is at one with the sense of "spiritual concernment", marking the rise also of attitudes that are entirely representative of middle- class consciousness. Elizabeth's life a Tunbridge Wells was not very different from the one she led at home, but was significantly free from domestic duties:

> She rose at her constant Hour, four a Clock, and spent two hours or thereabouts with God; then having begged a Blessing on them, about Six began to drink her Waters, Walking, and Conversing

> with serious Christian Friends, till she had finished that Day's Waters, and dined about one a Clock, and sat an hour after in Converse. The rest of the Day, which was here free from Domestic Cares and Inspection, and had no Diversion but receiving Visits, (which some Persons of Quality would condescend kindly to make her, and of which she would repay with Civility, as many in one day, as she received in four or five,) she improved in Devotion, Reading the Holy Scriptures, and other useful Books, Meditation, and secret Prayer, and walking in a private commodious Walk (Walker, 1690: 141).

4.8 The Births of Her Children and Their Baptisms

Antony Walker explains that Elizabeth was strong enough to bear and give birth to eleven children: 6 sons and 5 daughters, besides some spontaneous abortions. Mr. Walker copies a list in which Elizabeth herself had specified, retrospectively, all of her deliverances. It must be pointed out that, among all these various children, only one daughter eventually reached adulthood, and she died while giving birth to one boy, who finally survived. The dates are as follows:

DATE	DELIVERANCE
July 12th, 1651	There is no gender stated here, but later she specifies that in 1654 she gave birth to her first son, so this first child was a girl.
August 29th, 1652	A girl. Elizabeth was feverish for ten weeks.
February 5th, 1654	The first son.
December 23rd, 1655	A stillborn daughter.
May 15th, 1657	A son.
June 8th 1658	A daughter. The author states that she suffered three nights and three days.
October 22nd, 1659	A son.
December 11th, 1660	A stillborn son. It was a hard labour; she "fell into Melancholy" after this. Old "temptations" came back to her, as in her youth.
October 9th, 1662	The ninth child, a son.
November 14th, 1663	A daughter. She states it was a "speedy and safe deliverance".
May 1st, 1665	A stillborn son, after a very difficult deliverance.

In a short sentence, Elizabeth summarizes the efforts of a whole life getting pregnant and giving birth: "Three of my Children were still born, which, with the rest the Lord hath been pleased to take out of this Life, I humbly hope, and do believe, are now happy in Heaven, enjoying God for all Eternity" (Walker, 1690: 64). The long process of that motherly existence started on the day of her 28th birthday: on that date, she started giving birth to children, and then she was constantly and repeatedly pregnant for 14 years, until she was 42. At that point,

her body seems to have entered into a state of barrenness or into an early menopause.

It is worth noticing that her husband adds at this point a note on the ceremony of baptism, specifying part of what her wife thought about the role of crosses or any other symbol of religious identity. It seems that Elizabeth was not very fond of showing crosses or other "appendages" of religion during the baptisms because she was "fearfull many lost much of the Substance, by being over-fond of the Shadow" (Walker, 1690: 65). This was possibly one aspect that might show some (probably indirect) influence of puritanism; on the other hand, however, the central body of the Church of England did not put any excessive emphasis on external shows of faith or external objects. It is because of this reason that the Anglican churches had almost no symbols until the nineteenth century.

So, while Elizabeth seems to be very mindful of the relative importance of external symbols and is cautious when using them, her position is not eccentric or odd within the context of the Church of England, and need not show any influence of Puritanism. Let us remember that the poet George Herbert, who came to emblematise all the central qualities of the good Anglican priest, put much more emphasis on the sacramental role of the altar and the eucharist than on the role of the cross in actual worship. All in all, this was in full accordance with established reformation doctrine: the function and the significance of Christ's sacrifice were sufficient for all believers, and they occurred only once in history for all of humanity. And beyond this, there is an inherent fear of icon worship here: for Elizabeth, in the words of her husband, one should avoid being "over-fond of the Shadow", that is, the object itself should never be made a sign of worship. It is a "shadow" of the real sacrifice of Christ only, and it should not be mistaken for the real thing. Let us remember that making the sign of the cross had also been a questionable gesture, and one that Puritans tried to avoid. But in reference to this, her posture was tolerant: she did not think that children could suffer from anything by using this sign in the baptism. Once more, in this aspect she appears to the readers as a fully coherent member of the central and established church: her behaviour as a mother appears to have been fully conscientious, at the time of her childrens's baptisms and in everything concerning their education. It is that particular aspect that we are going to concentrate on now.

4.9 The Education of Children

Education had a clear goal for Antony Walker, one that was successfully accomplished by Mrs. Walker and that concerned vitally their children: "to train them up in the true and early knowledge of Religion, and Nurture, and Fear of God" (Walker, 1690: 66). In full correspondence with this, Elizabeth regarded the education of children as the most important task a woman could accomplish. But it was not only a concern that belonged to women, on the contrary, it involved the church and the nation as well, and it is important to quote Mr. Walker on this: "She considered Children as the nursery of Families, the Church, and Nation; and that Errors in their Education were hardly Corrected ever after; therefore she improved her utmost Diligence and Wisdom to teach them whilst young, the way in which they should walk, that when they were old they might not depart from it" (Walker, 1690: 67). So, far from this being a theme that concerns only the family, it is one that is incardinated strongly in the religious and institutional life of the whole country. It is precisely at this point that personal and political life are joined together: the basic structure of society is the nuclear family, but this unit is also essential in the life of the entire building of the church of England, not only because of Anthony's role in it, but also because of the exemplary value that he, his wife and children assume in his life. This is precisely what the early reformers asked for: a worthy like that could work like a little community of virtue.

After the period of the English Revolution and Civil War, the main institutional aim of the church of the England was that of stabilisation; the writing and publication of the book took place more than thirty years after the return of Charles II, but it must be certainly seen as fulfilling an ideological agenda. It could be said that, for the clergy, the personal was also political, in a full sense of the term: if we notice the descriptions of their everyday life in their personal accounts, the intention is not directly to present themselves as virtuous in order to obtain a benefit or to cause some kind of mimetic effect. What counts is their personal and intimate satisfaction, which they can be perceive as an effect of God's presence in their lives; this, in turn, can have a public projection, but this is not strictly necessary. It is sufficient for the family to be virtuous and to enjoy their virtue in private, which does not mean that this privacy cannot become in turn helpful to others. Exactly this is the process that we see at work in the Walker's experience, and the education of the children is supposed to be a part of this project.

Her husband is quite proud of how Elizabeth accomplished this task: "she was as completely qualified for this performance as was possible to be desired or

wished" (Walker, 1690: 67). And immediately he goes on to enumerate her achievements: her first care, regarding her daughters, was "to keep their minds uncorrupted by vanity or pride", followed by teaching them through private instructors, the arts that she could not perform by herself: these included. These were dancing and singing "and writing" (we imagine, writing music, because she perfectly knew how to write), and they were taught came "at fit seasons" (Walker, 1690: 68). To reward her children whenever they did it right, she also gave them "small pecuniary rewards" so that they could give it to the poor, when they knocked at their door. Being neat was also very important in education: Elizabeth said that "although all neat people were not good, almost all good people were neat, and that she had rather see a hole in their cloaths than a spot upon them" (Walker, 1690: 72). All of this was done in order to "to cultivate their daughter's minds, to improve their intellectuals, and to season their tender hearts with a due sense of religion"; to reach this goal, she taught them to read "as soon as they could pronounce their letters"; she did so by using a Catechism and also prohibited to the servants to teach their daughters "idle songs" or "foolish stories" (Walker, 1690: 69) that could win their ways into their hearts. Mr. Walker describes how, little by little, she dictated words to her daughters according to the age, and "as they grew up, gave them directions concerning prayer, of which I find a Treatise, which I would have called an excellent one, had it not been hers, so nearly related to me" (Walker, 1690: 70). So, Elizabeth Walker, following the widespread tradition of the Books of Prayers, decided to write one of her own, and use it in combination with other books, both for alphabetisation and the early introduction of her children into the essentials of Christianity.

We have now come upon one of the main sources of identity-making and power for the women of the seventeenth century, and specifically for Elizabeth Walker: her use and manipulation of letters and books, and her own projection of herself in writing. To the extent that they were in direct charge of the education of children, she was directly responsible for the first building of their identity. This conferred a major source of authority to an English middle-class woman, especially in a religious family, and in radical contrast with any Catholic woman of the period (with very localised exceptions); the Bible, in strict protestant observance, was the first tool for alphabetization and upbringing. But "having observed that many would read commendably in the Bible, where the sentences are shorter" (Walker, 1690: 73), Elizabeth would handle the children other "Books of Instruction and Devotion" (p. 71) which included Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, some abbreviations of English chronicles, lives of holy exemplary persons (especially of those who were

so when young), so that she, according to her husband, would perform two tasks at the same time: she would teach them reading and, at the same time, good behaviour and prayers. Edith Snook (Snook, 2007: 63) gives notice of how prayer and giving advice in the exercise of it actually conferred great power on women who dared to write: in other words, prayer legitimated women as writers, and it was an excellent opportunity for (occasionally) writing on politics.

Once more, we miss the contents of the full prayer books that Elizabeth wrote, but we nevertheless have fragments preserved by her husband. Anthony, in his section XII (on the education of their children) offers to the reader some excerpts of the "Prayer Book" that his wife composed, lasting in his book from pages 73 to the end of the section, on page 82. He decides to transcribe entirely part of this book of prayer because according to him "it contains her picture to the Life and was to teach her Daughters what they should be" (Walker, 1690: 74). In these fragments, Mrs. Walker's words are in italics so as to differentiate clearly what she wrote.

As she puts it, prayers are extremely important because "it's the duty of Christians to pray fervently and frequently, with Faith, with Humility, with Sincerity, with Constancy, with Watchfulness, in the spirit, with warmth and Life" (Walker, 1690: 73). Prayer is a way to give glory to God, but also to obtain mercy and help from him; such is the definition that Mrs. Walker offers of the act of praying. Again, we find this sense of a spiritual trade in religious practice: it almost seems that if religion were a currency, prayers would be the coins and bills to pay with. The children were thus instructed in the protestant sense of praying, and were oriented in it from the start. Intermixed with these prayers by Elizabeth, Mr. Walker goes on making his commentaries; the impression he gives is one of constant intervention, not in order to modify her voice, but to insist on the correctness of her thought. He also goes on filling in the blanks, offering summaries of her writings when these are not directly included or are too lengthy for her purposes. For instance, we are told that Elizabeth went so far as to fill twenty-nine pages detailing to their children the promises God make to those who persevere in Grace. One of the heads (or items on her list) includes a special message for her children:

> Having these great and precious Promises cleanse yourselves from all filthiness of Flesh, and Spirit, perfecting holiness in the Fear of God. For Godliness hath the Promises of this Life, and of the Life to come; therefore seek first the Kingdom of Heaven, and its

> Righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. (Walker, 1690: 78)

As we can see, Elizabeth's own style is fully adorned with the expressions and echoes of the Bible; "seek the kingdom of Heaven, and all these things shall be added unto you" comes from the gospel of Matthew, 6: 33. There is thus no break or sense of quotation, no indication of distance between her words and the biblical ones; on the contrary, her own writing is entirely sustained by the Bible and feels even more assertive because of it. The biblical quotes are fully integrated in her own style and gives it a sense of affirmation and strength, and this occurs over all of the "heads" or sections of hers, dedicated to her children, that Mr Walker transcribed.

Occasionally Elizabeth goes beyond her own self-ascribed role as a guide for her children and begins assuming the role of a theologian: for instance, in her eighth "head", she states that she will give an "abbreviation of Faith and Christian Principles, which I have collected out of divers authors, with some things of my own conceptions" (Walker, 1690: 79). But here Mr. Walker steps back and does not want to transcribe it, because "she distinguished not between what was her own, and what she collected from others" (Walker, 1690: 79). It is worth noting that Elizabeth Grymeston had the very same problem in her *Miscellanea*; she copied from other popular poets and authors most of the book but did not specify the sources. But what was not a problem for Grymeston becomes an issue for Mr. Walker: here it is precisely the necessity to bring back the voice of his wife as it originally was (biblical references included) that makes the husband pause and cease from transcribing.

In her text, Elizabeth goes on explaining what was adequate and inadequate for a married woman and a mother: she should not be idle, she should give money to the poor, she should wake up very early and give meat to her household, she should be obedient to her husband, "even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him Lord" (Walker, 1690: 75) and she should adorn herself not with gold, but with the heart and spirit. Once again, here the husband feels the need to interrupt these thoughts and expresses his admiration for her because she always dressed with decency and *gravitas*, and always in black (not even a colored ribbon), something that he is very thankful for: "she was my Crown and Glory, and the Heart of her Husband did safely trust in her" (Walker, 1690: 76). This section is followed by another set of praises from husband to wife and mother of his children, from which I will highlight these words:

> She was Careful without sollicitous Anxiety; Frugal without sordid Parsimony; Liberal, without squandring Profuseness; Laborious, without servile Drudgery; Decent, without vain Ostentation; Circumspect, without disquieting Diffidence; Neat, without Niceness (Walker, 1690: 90).

This long sentence, made of a steady series of adversative phrases, shows clearly the more careful and controlled style of Mr Walker: his wife's qualities are always qualified by the avoidance of their extremes, so that the result is of the passage is the image of a woman that has full self-control over her own capacities. Anthony goes on to praise her sense of economy and the attitude of keeping things that perhaps are not useful at the immediate moment, but can be useful later. He also praises her careful watching of the domestic fires that were lighted at home, always preventing the danger of the household, her modesty, and her care of the servants, always avoiding too much familiarity among them (Walker, 1690: 91) …. At this point, he seems to be concentrating again on the practical side of things. But only a few pages later, he gives full room to his wife's voice in writing, on her commemoration of a much more serious, transcendent subject: the death of their children.

4.10 The Death of Her Children

In section XVI the minister writes on Elizabeth's attitude towards sickness in the family, and he fully transcribes what she wrote regarding the different illnesses of their daughters. His respect of her text appears to be full and complete for several pages, and leaves out any editorial intervention of his. Let us observe her narration of the last days of the child Mary, in order to notice the values she emphasizes:

> My sweet Child, and dearly beloved Daughter *Mary*, a sweet tender hearted obedient Child, of great Prudence, and early Piety, and exemplary Inclination to the knowledge of God, and concerns of a better Life; she fell suddenly ill of a Sore Throat, *Jan.* 17. 1669. and after four Days ilness, sweetly fell asleep in Jesus Christ, *Jan.* 21.
>
> In this last and short sickness, she had very serious apprehensions of Death. Said she should die but was not afraid of Death: And desired she might die quietly, and without disturbance. The Physician desiring to give her a little Wine, ask'd her if she loved Sack? she answered, No. He desired her to take a little: She said she would if he pleased; but she did not love it to fuddle with. A

> few hours before she died, she desired to go to Bed, (out of which she had been taken by reason of the Flegm that troubled her,) and I being unwilling, she said, she would now go to Bed for adieu, and for all: Where she fell a sleep in Jesus; enfolded in the Arms of Everlasting Mercies. She resigned up her Soul with these, and the like Expressions, *Lord let me come to thee, my Lord and my God:* And, *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit*. I acknowledge the Words were given her, but she readily received them, and oft repeated though she could not speak but with difficulty; she had been so affable and winning to all, Rich and Poor, that many shed more Tears for her, than at the departure of their own Children; she was much desired in Life, and of all who knew her, much lamented at Death (Walker, 1690: 99).

This scene, rendered in great detail, is arresting. Mary (perhaps surprisingly for a modern reader) behaves not as a mere child, but almost as a responsible adult throughout, in her final moments. There is no anxiety or complaint in her, she does not express sadness or sorrow; these feelings are left to her mother and to other friends (they "shed more Tears for her, than at the departure of her own children"). She shows some resistance only at the moment of taking wine ("she did not love it to fuddle with"); in the end, she is laid quietly to "sleep with Jesus". Elizabeth admits that her very last word were "given to her" (that is, she repeated what she was being told to say) but that they were accepted by her without difficulty ("she readily received them"). Some lines later, Anthony transcribes also some words of thankfulness from her to God for at least having spared two children (that unfortunately would die later); so that even in her darkest hour, having witnessed how several children passing away, she stills feels the need to thank God and to be contented with her life: "Lord I bless thee that of Eleven, for whom I Praise thee, thou hast yet spared me two; I beseech thee, if it may consist with thy good Pleasure, continue them in this World, keeping them from the Evil of it, to a good Old-Age, choice Instruments of thy Glory" (Walker, 1690: 99). Mary died on the 21st of January 1669, but something seemed to console powerfully the mother on the 23rd. Let us examine in detail this incident:

> *January* 23. 1669. Was a day of Mercy to me in the midst of my Affliction, being Lord's Day, my sweet *Mary* lying then Dead with us in the House; the extremity of my Affection forced me into the Chamber where she then lay, a cold piece of Clay: I there poured out my Soul to God in Prayer (…) I took my Bible, and my Intention was to Read in the *New-Testament* to allay my own

> Grief, with the dolorous Sufferings of my Saviour, but my Bible suddenly fell open in my Lap, and my Eye presently fixed upon *Habbak.* 1.12 (…) *My Holy One, I should not Dye, but Live*" (Walker, 1690: 101).

Once again (just like the random opening of one page in the Bible before the wedding was taken as a token of good luck by the minister), this accident is taken by Elizabeth as a true sign of salvation for her dear daughter. There is a direct connection between the suffering of Christ in the cross and that which has been visited upon little Mary, and it is not only that the crucifixion offers consoling thoughts ("my Intention was to Read in the *New-Testament* to allay my own Grief, with the dolorous Sufferings of my Saviour") but that it was sufficient to save her for all eternity. This appears to Elizabeth to be evident and confirmed by the quote from the Book of Habbakuk that she randomly finds: "My holy one, I should not Dye but live". The truth is, for her, that this line has not been found randomly at all: God has guided her hand, in order to assure her of the child's redemption. There is no place for simple coincidence in Elizabeth's worldview.

And yet, too much affection could be considered a sin, or at least something to ask for forgiveness for. This becomes evident when Elizabeth refers to the death of her sixteen-year old daughter, who had been given the same name as her. Once again, let us quote her text, preserved by her husband:

> She was sixteen Years, three Months, and eleven Days old when she dyed. After fourteen Days Sickness of the Small-Pox, she changed her Corruptible State, I humbly hope, into Immortal Glory, where she shall never Sin, and the Effects of Sin shall be no more (…) In the time of this last Sickness, she oft asked me to Pray with her; which when I performed, I was too absolute with God for her Life, all the time of her Sickness, without express Submission to his Will. The Lord pardon the Extremity of my Affection" (Walker, 1690: 107-108).

An opposition is here drawn between corruption and immortal glory; the first belongs inevitably to the body, and the second belongs to the glorified essence of the being: when Elizabeth (the daughter) is finally liberated, she "shall never Sin, and the Effects of Sin shall be no more." Sin shall effectively ben cancelled in the afterlife: the girl will have had access to effective salvation. But we must notice that the assurance of salvation in this case is not absolute (as in fact it can never be from a fully reformed viewpoint): the mother qualifies that she hopes ("I humbly hope") but, in spite of her overwhelming grief, she cannot fully assert that the girl is safe

in Heaven. In any case, an excessive grief can appear as potentially sinful, since it does not come from a full agreement with the will of God; an "express submission" to it is what should be offered. Yet the mother repeats again and again her hope of her daughter's salvation in the next pages. The young Elizabeth must surely have gone from seeing her physical parents to see the face of the heavenly Father:

> Dear Child, she one Morning desired to see her Father, and that she might see his Face; saying, She had now taken her leave of her dear Father's Face. But the Lord spared her a little longer, and she did see him again; and now I humbly hope she sees the face of her Father in Heaven. (Walker, 1690: 110)

The words "dear child" are constantly repeated in these pages, and we can feel the deep sadness behind them. The mother transcribed the very last words of her daughter: "If I die, my dear Mother, you will remember what I now said to you; and I could be content to be a little Child again, that I might lie at your Breast and Bosom." (Walker, 1690: 111)

The idea of being a little, newborn child again is something that seems to be recurrent in human beings. It's the imagined joy of living in a very small world reduced to only one person: the affectionate mother, that is capable of satisfying all her child's demands.

4.11 Compassion and Generosity

The Church of England never came to clarify fully whether it relied only and exclusively on grace for the salvation of all of its members. Its position was often purposefully blurry: it was necessary to keep the entire church as representing as many of the Christian faithful as possible, nation-wide, and this often meant not alienating part of the community with theological subtleties. That becomes visible in the text by the Walkers, both husband and wife. What is the function of compassion and charity in the life of a good couple? Does salvation rely on it? Or is it rather something that one must see as an external sign of one's good disposition, showing that the individual subject is already on the good way towards salvation? The insistence on charity and good works in the pages of the Walkers while at the same time making themselves subservient to the overall will of God seems to indicate the latest. There are, however, other factors at work, some of which can be traced back to the social context: especially, the need of having dignified wives in the middle classes acting as paragons of charity, in ways that

often exceeded the charitable behavior of the husbands themselves. Let us see this in some detail.

On one particular occasion, Anthony seemed to be attacked by some sense of guilt when expressing gratitude for being so happily married. They always celebrated their marriage anniversary and invited important people to dinner (in this specific case, "three Coroneted Heads, and others of best Quality (next to Nobility) honoured us with their Company" (Walker, 1690: 144). But then he immediately adds, somehow guiltily: "But some may say, to what purpose was this waste? Why was not this rather given to the Poor?" (Walker, 1690: 144). And the answer he himself gives, having referenced a quote from the gospels in which it is explained that we need to share our food with the poor (St. Luke, 14-12) is simple: Mrs. Walker herself had already done it and left some food for them, "for she fed the Poor with more delight than she eat her own meals" (Walker, 1690: 146). After everybody had eaten well, she saved discreetly the left-overs for the poor and, according to her husband, this was enough to provide for a family for an entire fortnight. Charity thus becomes a major trait for them both, but it is one that seems to characterize Elizabeth more than her husband.

Later on in the text, mr. Walker also narrates how he regularly gave her a small amount of money so that she could spend it without any kind of explanation: "This small Pittance being absolutely her own, her scrupulous Tenderness was freed from giving me account what she did with it" (Walker, 1690: 167). Even he joked about it, often calling her "my landlady", since that money came from the rent of a small farm that had always been considered hers; it was worth nothing more than 23 pounds a year (Walker, 1690: 166). On the other hand, she actively encouraged her husband to give to the poor, something in which he took pride: "she never diswaded (dissuaded) me from giving, often encouraged me to give" (Walker, 1690:168). He husband enumerates in detail all the different varieties of charities his wife insisted in undertaking: they kept students at their house for years, she used to give new blankets to the women who were with child, she bought books to give away to the poor, and even offered to work for physically for them when they needed it, but she seemed never take advantage of their needs. In short, she "would never take advantage of their Necessity, to make them work the Cheaper" (Walker, 1690: 174). This became clear even in the preparation for what would be Elizabeth's last Christmas. At that time, Anthony tried to persuade her of not taking the trouble to prepare any meal at all (they used to invite rich and poor to the house for dinner every year) because she was already very sick and tired, in what would be her last illness. But she gently refused, and told him that she did not

want to interrupt a practice that had been going on for so many years at their home (Walker, 1690: 147).

The practice of charity is approved and encouraged by the husband, but it is seen through the two texts (the husband and the wife's) as being mostly practiced by Elizabeth. This feminization of charity is far from being a feature of this specific household, or of this specific literary text. On the contrary, it is a feature that characterises the English literature of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the specific context of the middle classes and in the context of the church. It can be recognized in many guidebooks for the behavior of women written (not coincidentally) by men such as Richard Allestree or Samuel Clarke. In *The Ladies Calling in Two Parts* (1673)[131], Richard Allestree (1619-1681) dedicates a whole section to compassion in women, insisting on the fact that the most important qualities for them are meekness, modesty, affability and piety, and stating explicitly that "'(…) It will be a very commendable industry to qualifie themselves to be helpful to the poor in as many instances as they can; not only opening their purses, but dispensatories too, providing medecines for such as either by disease, or casualty want that sort of relief (…)" (Allestree, 1673: 48). For reverend Samuel Clarke, author of *A Looking-glass for Good Women* (1677), humility and meekness were also mainly qualities that characterized them; his own wife possessed them, and he felt proud of her for that (although his words about his wife are far less passionate than Mr Walker's about his):

> Her Humility was not inferior to her other Graces. She had always a very low esteem of her self, and was ready to prefer others before her self, and would not take it ill when her inferiors were set above her: She well remembered the Apostle *Peters* charge, *All of you be subject one to another, and be cloathed with Humility. For God resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace to the Humble.* And that of St. *Paul, Rom.* 12.10. *In honour prefer one another.* Her Love to God, to his Ordinances, and to his Children was hearty, and without Dissimulation (Clarke, 1677: 28).

4.12 Practical Wisdom: Medicine

Among so many virtues, the husband does not forget to write about her wisdom regarding medicine. She had taken advice from her brother-in-law, a doctor from

[131] For Allestree, it is also possible to consult an online version of the text in EEBO (Early English Books Online). Allestree, Richard: *The Ladies Calling in Two Parts*. London, 1673. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo/A23744.0001.001?view=toc. Consulted on 15 July 2025.

the London College, who "who wrote her many Receipts, and directed her what methods to proceed in for most common Diseases, into which her poor Neighbours might be incident" (Walker, 1690: 178). Furthermore, she searched for advice too in other doctors, and she had important books of medicine of the period.
But, in general, medicine in general consisted of bleeding, purging, and the giving of emetics, and it was still full of superstition. So Mrs. Walker, as many other women, was knowledgeable in herbs and other remedies. She administered what she thought to be best, and she stayed taking care of the sick in the neighbourhood. The husband refers one example:

> A Neigbouring Minister having a long and dangerous Sickness, when upon a Visit made him, she took notice, that (as she feared) he wanted Persons of Experience about him, (having before lost his Wife, and his Physicians by reason of distance could not be long or often with him,) she daily went to him for many days, at near two Miles distance, and staid with him most part of the Days (Walker, 1690: 179).

So, when doctors were not at hand, women intervened. Mrs. Walker was also helpful when neighbour ladies were with child:

> Another object of her Painfull Charity (which I the rather name because our *Litany* expressly reckons it amongst the objects of our devoutest Prayers,) was, Women Labouring with Child, whom she would rise at any hour of the Night to go too, and carry with her what might be usefull to them, having good Skill, and store of Medicines always ready by her for such occasions (Walker, 1690: 180).

Mrs. Walker did not have a licence, but having a licence was extremely difficult taking in consideration that most women did not know Latin. As an example, between 1580 and 1775, 850 licences were issued by the archbishops of Canterbury. But among them, only 7 out of that figure were issued to women (Wyman, 1984: 28). On the other hand, practitioners were quite expensive, and hard to find. That is the reason why, in 1542, an Act issued by the Parliament enabled "divers honest men and women" to continue with their activities as unlicensed doctors or surgeons, since doctors were only "minding their own lucres"

(Wyman, 1984: 28). That way, women had a right and (also) a religious obligation to act as doctors, especially for the poor[132].

4.13 The Marriage and Death of Margaret Cox

The greatest of sorrows for Elizabeth, without a doubt, came to her in 1675, and in her text it corresponds to one of the sections in which she speaks most freely, and one in which her expression appears to us as being most strongly spontaneous and sincere. Her entries for that year begin with remark about the marriage of their only child who reached adulthood: Margaret. *"January* 17. 1675. My Dear Husband, and my Dear Child *Margaret Walker,* went to *London,* in reference to our great Concern, her Marriage, our onely one, so dear to us. She was Married *February* the 1st, 1675. to Mr. *John Cox,* Barrister of *Grays-Inn*" (Walker, 1690: 150). But very soon she mother has to write the most difficult: "I acknowledge, *very deservedly for my Sins* the Lord hath taken from us out of this Life our onely One, the most dearly Beloved Daughter, and Child of my choice Affections, Mrs. Margaret Cox; she was married February the first, 1675." (Walker, 1690: 151) (The emphasis is mine).

Once again, looking for the cause of such a disaster, Elizabeth finds it in her own sins: otherwise, there is no evident reason why God should have taken her only child from her. The serious (and biblical) theme of seeming injustice of life is here projected clearly by the writer on herself. And here we find a pattern that is very representative of the Protestant mentality. A patent unfairness occurs in life, and it must be attributed to a cause. God is of course the cause of everything, but He is at the same time all-powerful and all good, so he cannot be given the blame for the accidents and injustices in life. As a result, and in search of the cause of guilt, the believer turns towards him or herself, and this generates a strong sense of intimacy and of personal unworthiness. This sense of personal guilt or sinfulness is highly dramatic, but at the same time it was seemingly inevitable, and it was given a voice repeatedly in the time of the Reformation in the wrings of ordinary persons, many of whom were mothers. One of them was Elizabeth Walker herself.

It is hard not to sense the affection of the mother for the departed child in her words: "our onely One, the most dearly Beloved Daughter, and Child of my choice". The possessive "my" must be read here as an expression of tenderness in itself, given her usual restraint; notice how her phrase goes from "our", to "the"

[132] It is interesting to check that, on Wikipedia, Elizabeth Walker appears as a pharmacist; https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elizabeth_Walker_(pharmacist). Accessed on 23 February 2023.

to "my", as if her position as mother was the last one hierarchically, but nevertheless had a unique intimacy with the dead girl. On the other hand, this personal loss coexists with her thankfulness for having, at least, one grandson to take care of after having gone through eleven pregnancies:

> The 19th *November* following she was Delivered of a Son, Lord's Day seven a Clock in the Morning. She continued pretty well two or three Days; *Tuesday* following sickned of a Fever, and dyed *December* the 5th, 1675. But God in the midst of his just Judgments remembred his Mercy to us, hath spared the little one to us, Blessed be God for it, and received the Motherless Babe into Covenant with himself by Baptism. I Bless God he is the Son of good Parents, his Father a very sober and a good Man, his dear deceased Mother was a fine, lovely, handsome, well accomplished Woman, both in Nature and Grace, to God's Praise I do make my Acknowledgments, let it have no other Censure (Walker, 1690: 152).

Let us observe that, in the middle of her bereavement, Elizabeth never loses her faith in God's justice. He has passed "judgement" on them, and quite sternly, but "in the midst" of them, he has also shown mercy. Thus mercy and justice appear as two extremes of the same harmonious balance, which is never questioned explicitly or implicitly: God's will is perfect and it has to be accepted, even though human beings can only understand it imperfectly. He has chosen to "spare" the now motherless little child, and we clearly sense that she remains thankful to him in spite of everything. Elizabeth is at the same time poignantly sincere and representative of the Reformation.

The mother goes on remembering her daughter for four more pages, with devoted and sad affection: "she was a very loving, dutiful Child to her Parents, a very endearing Wife to her Husband, and very sweet in all her Relations; she was very acceptable to all her Husband's Kindred, by whom the loss of her was much bewailed" (Walker, 1690: 153). Dutifulness and acceptability do not strike us as particularly positive qualities, but at the end of the seventeenth century they were certainly among the best that a daughter could have, and among those that recommended her more to others (in this case, to her husband's family). Like Elizabeth herself, she has been an example of self-restraint, even in her deathbed. But a terrible fear appears in the end: because of her sickness and of the way in which it affected her understanding, Margaret ran the risk of losing her self-control and possibly voicing some complaint against God or some inconvenient rant. This,

indeed, appeared to be the greatest risk in her final moments, and it is curious to observe that her mental state would not have been an excuse for it. On the contrary, it is precisely thanks to God's own will that Margaret has not come to utter one inadequate word:

> In the time of her Travail, and following Sickness, she was very Meek and Patient, as in all her former Sicknesses, and Pain: The Disease took her Head, which deprived her of her Understanding; but I bless God, that so guarded her Tongue, that she did not dishonour him" (Walker, 1690: 155).

Meekness and patience prevailed in the end. If Margaret had spoken aggressively or unkindly, it would have meant a "dishonour" to her husband and, one imagines, also to Elizabeth herself. There is an intervention of God even in these final moments, in order to prevent the loosening of Margaret's tongue: even that, which would have been exclusively a consequence of her illness, would have been seen as sinful. Finally, the mother notes down her deepest desire; that her daughter Margaret could rest in peace with the Lord. And it is at this point that she seems to break down, when she realizes that there are none of her children left alive:

> I beseech thee Pardon my Sins and Offences, which have provoked thee to this manifestation of thy displeasure against us, bereaving us of our Children, that of eleven none remains; and of this, the loss more grievous than any of the rest, though they, with her, through thy Kindness very desirable to us, but she our last, one and all. Lord, should thou take my Forfeitures, how destitute should I be, not only of Children, but of all thy sustaining Mercies, and above all, in the irreparable loss of Thy self, who art abundantly better to me than Sons and Daughters (Walker, 1690: 157).

It is certainly a tragedy; but even in the tragedy, she admits that the Lord is more precious than her own daughters or sons. She tries to find a reason for so much sadness: "(…) help me to find out the accursed thing which provoked thee to smite with so heavy a Blow" (Walker, 1690: 157), for in her mind there has to be one reason, one "accursed thing" that she does not understand, and which causes that unutterable pain. That "accursed thing" can be nothing other than sin. In her desperation, she prays to be close to that little child who has been spared by God: "Good Lord let that dear Chid she hath left behind her, cement and joyn our Hearts in joynt Thankfulness unto thee, and unite us one to another" (Walker,

1690: 158). The only respite for her suffering comes from the child that has been left behind, as a kind defence against the dominance of sin.

Her husband has transcribed nine pages from her own hand completely, but there is a powerful reason for his having done so: "I have transcribed this long Paragraph, without altering, or changing the order of a Word; if some may account it tedious, who either have not been exercised with such Tryals, or have other shorter and cheaper ways to relieve themselves against them, let them use their own Methods, without censuring, or despising hers. This was her Heart's Ease when she was overwhelmed (…)" (Walker, 1690: 160). So Elizabeth's spontaneity in her suffering comes to be, in itself, a mark of her exemplarity. Her husband's scrupulous respect for her writing (so far as we can tell) comes from his respect for her person; if she has written tediously or excessively, it has only been in order to reach "her Heart's ease".

4.14 A Terrestrial Seraphim

The idealization of Elizabeth by her husband reaches a decisive point in the final part of the book. Significantly, it is supposed to combine the spiritual with the practical aspects of life; the reading and knowledge of scripture with the attention to others, especially her children:

> The Oil which fed this Lamp was her much Reading good Books, but especially the Holy Scriptures, in which she meditated Day and Night (…) Her Knowledge was not merely *Notional* and Swimming in her Brain, but *Experimental* and *Practical*. She felt and tasted, yea, lived the Truths she knew; and teaching her Children the grounds of Religion, grounded herself more deeply in them (Walker, 1690: 189).

Thus, the teaching to the children and to others entails the firm "grounding" of the teacher on the same moral and religious territory as them. The function of what today we would call empathy is remarkable: one of the favorite sayings of Elizabeth was "Great affection, great affliction", the former including the latter inevitably. Loving others implied that the loving person had to accompany the beloved ones in their "troubles and Crosses", as the husband expresses it.

The story of Mary Bun is a singular one and shows clearly what the husband meant when he talked about "pity to the poor". Anthony narrates the story of a poor child, being 13 at the moment, that once knocked at the family's household door. She was poorly dressed, dirty and with scalds (probably from ringworm);

Mrs. Walker immediately took good care of her, gave her lodging and some knowledge on the Bible and the alphabet, and bathed her and clothed her. A few months later, she managed to find her a job as an apprentice with the husband of one of her maidens, who was a rich farmer; but the permission of the child's father was still needed. This permission never arrived, so Elizabeth herself went to have an encounter with him. And this is what happened;

> We came to Sir *William Lemmon*'s, because the Girl told us her Father work'd constantly with him; it was our unhappiness that Worthy Person was from Home; and though we found the Girls Father, no words could make the least Impression on him, or extort other answer from him but, That she was a naughty Girl; He would neither meddle or make with her; We might do what we would; not so much as once I thank you for all your Cost and Trouble (Walker, 1690: 194).

In the end, the Walkers had nothing to do; they did not have any other remedy than sending her back to where she belonged, with the difference that now she resembled a human being a bit more. But their insistence in itself is telling: this is a specific instance of their practical application of Charity, and one in which their desire for it is contradicted by forces beyond their control.

In the final pages, Anthony surely reaches the most extreme of his many idealizations of his wife, going so far as to give her an angelic quality: "She was a Terrestrial Seraphim"; in a state of seeming exaltation, he goes on to state that if the Biblical *Book of Laws* had been lost, we could recover these laws just by evoking his wife's life:

> My thoughts of her *Vertues* bringing to my Mind the remembrance of other good Women, and amongst them *Huldah* the Prophetess, in whose time the Law was found, (the Copy of which had been lost in the Evil Days before *Josiah*,) almost transported me to write what others would call (and I would not deny to border on it,) an extravagant Hyperbole; that if the Law had been lost with us, it might have been renewed and copied out from her Life and Practice (Walker, 1690: 199).

Let us notice how, having come almost to the end of his narration, he looks at his text from the outside and admits its "almost extravagant" hyperbolic nature; at this point, it is not only that the life of Elizabeth resembles that of characters in the Bible and thus acquires its sanctified nature through this imitation; rather, herself becomes a being of an almost biblical nature, so that she might be one of

the "good women" of the Bible, similar to "Huldah the prophetess" and possessing the same inspirational nature. After all, "(her virtues) transported me to write" the pages that make up the book.

And just a few pages later, we come to the final farewell between Mr Walker and his wife, which is recorded in his usual precise but paradoxical style:

> (…) I am now arrived at my *Mournful Heavy Loss,* and her much *waited for,* and *desired Gain,* and *great Advantage, her much bewailed Death,* to prepare for which had been her daily work for many Years, which happened *February* the 23d, this present Year 1690 (Walker, 1690: 210).

Again, we face a seemingly contradictory fact, but one which is essentially representative of the Protestant perspective: Anthony's is an experience of loss, but it is a moment "much waited for, and desired gain, and great advantage", as it entails her encounter with God. In the last two pages of the book Mr. Walker keeps writing about her last moments. "rheumatism, Erysipelas, and pneumonia" (Walker, 1690: 211) seemed to be the cause of her death. In these pages, the reader feels clearly the presence of death and the future loneliness of the husband; but in fact he did not survive much: in 1692 he would pass away too. But he would nevertheless leave her final words written down in the book, spoken to him before he briefly left her company to going to the Fyfield church: "A short prayer, my dear, before you go" (Walker, 1690: 211).

4.15 The Literary Style of Elizabeth Walker

The capacity for developing an inner life and giving testimony of it had developed to an extraordinary degree in Elizabeth. She became a minor, private writer, but a very assured one. Her own style is far from showy or self-conscious, like that of her husband is; it is more spontaneous, yet formal, and she often culminates her paragraphs with a paradox. That paradox summarises and dramatizes the conflict she has been addressing throughout. The following prayer is a quite significant example of Elizabeth 's style, revelatory of the theological depths she could achieve. It concerns her usual tendency towards melancholy, which she correctly identified as the weak point of her character. At the beginning, she simply praises God and formulates her desire to advance from her present doubtful position towards a clear sense of stability:

> Blessed God, thou art good, and continually dost good unto people. I beseech thee deliver me from a fluctuating and hesitating

> mind, and help me that I may with full resolution and fixation of soul cleave unto thee, that no other Lord besides thee hath no dominion or rule over me… (Walker, 1690: 81)

Let us notice the complexity of a text that seems, at first, quite simple in its nature. It begins with a simple blessing, that could easily be applied to any case, and which is almost customary in any form of protestant prayer. But immediately we move into a call for help, in a situation in which the writer herself is at a loss, unable to move and unsure of herself. "Deliver me", she aks, from a "fluctuating and hesitating" mind; she is therefore asking to be changed into someone more firm and more determined, able to achieve an assurance of which she is, at the moment of writing, incapable. So the writer is asking for a change of heart and for the "resolution and fixation" that would correspond to a true believer. Walker is giving us her own version of troubled selfhood, a usual theme in private devotion since the early church fathers: an intimate expression of anguish and of unworthiness.

But there are more layers of meaning here. Which "other Lord" is she referring to, that might claim her or have "dominion over" her? Who else might "rule over" her? The repeated suggestion of another possible lordship suggests that she is indeed making a choice between God and Satan, who also wanted to rule over Christ himself when she tempted him in the desert. This is not an ordinary prayer: it is a dramatic plea in the midst of a spiritual battle that must be won, not by the believer herself, but by God. And let us observe, finally, the paradox with which Walker hopes to obtain a resolution:

> …But that I may, with full purpose of heart, *chuse thy Service*, which may obviate all the temptations of this world (emphasis mine) (Walker, 1690: 81).

So, the final aim is to actually choose service: the position of the servant (one who does not make decisions, who has no choice but to obey) is one that is wilfully chosen by the believer. In this way, by letting God rule over her, she will be free from the state of anxiety that overwhelms her. The final paradox corresponds to the culmination of her prayer.

Or let us examine another prayer by her, on a similar subject:

> Engaged I am, o Lord, by covenant with thee in Baptism, to fight thy Battles. I beseech thee put on mee that whole and compleat armour, that I may be able to resist my strong enemies, that war against my soul, and fight against thee… (Walker, 1690: 120)

The beginning of this passage is based on a metaphor that would be very familiar to any protestant believer: the idea of the new covenant between man and God, that has been established since the baptism of Christ, and which emblematises the rebirth of sinful humanity (Adam) into a new beginning for the individual, in the form of baptism. The covenant, therefore, is established personally between the individual (in this paragraph, Walker) and God himself. But this covenant endows the speaker to demand something of God: the armour that will enable him "to resist my strong enemies", who are fighting both her and, through her, God himself. The armor that she demands to wear, and that will be given to her by her Lord, is the amour of faith that St. Paul preached in Ephesians 6: 11; she asks for these weapons in order to be able to resist the enemy who, once again, is tempting her capacity for resistance. The whole beginning of this prayer is entirely coherent in theological tems: let us observe that the armour is simply worn, but it is given to her by her Lord: the capacity of faith is something that has to be exerted by the believer, but that capacity is granted to her by the external power of God. Elizabeth Walker assumes, as a subject, the responsibility for this battle, but she still depends entirely on God, who is the true sources of any personal strength that she may have.

> For his sake who never sinned, I beseech thee support me with thy compassionate mercy to me, a loathsome and defiled sinner, and give me not ober to Spiritual judgments, hardness of heart, blindness of mind, impenitency, an evil heart of disbelief, departing from thee. (…) I beseech thee not chuse not my delusions, leaving me to a deceivable Heart, to which I dare not trust. (Walker, 1690: 120)

Elizabeth continues to build her discourse, with an ever-escalating sense of anguish. She is now asking for the full support of God, and enumerates the aspects that make her more afraid to fail in the spiritual warfare she has engaged in: "hardness of heart, blindness of mind, impenitency" and an "evil heart of disbelief". The hardness of heart and blindness of mind are far from being casual terms: they refer to the Old Testament attitude of the Pharaoh towards Moses and the people of Israel (Exodus, 7: 13 and following verses), which made him relentless and led him to disaster. Notice once more how Walker uses her Biblical references in order to characterise a possible version of herself that she is desperately trying to keep away, and which has the sort of weaknesses that she probably has seen in herself already: disbelief, and mistrust in God. It is indeed her own mind, the most intimate part of herself, that she is most afraid of: her "delusions" could make her heart "deceivable", she would "dare not trust" in it. Elizabeth is therefore fighting

herself, and she is asking for the superior strength of another in order to win that battle. It is indeed a psychological confrontation: one beween herself and herself, that takes place in the setting of her own mind.

Prayer has become indeed a form of literary self-expression here; one that involves allegory, metaphor and biblical reference, and which acquires a growing intensity as it advances towards its ending. It manages to reach towards its ending with a powerful image that is fully coherent with the entire text:

> I beseech thee, let thy unfathomed mercy in Jesus Christ give a mortal speedily prevent me, and give a mortal stab to all my corruptions, by what course soever thou wilt take with me, inly let me fall into thy compassionate Hands (Walker, 1690: 120-121).

God himself, therefore, is imagined as giving a "stab to all my corruptions", as if he was wielding a blade and killed her imperfections, by the same act letting her "fall into thy compassionate Hands". The image of killing gives way to the image of resting into compassionate hands of Christ: he is at the same time killer and compassionate protector. Elizabeth Walker had become, as we can see, a brilliant writer of prayers. She had learnt to give a voice to her inner turmoil and to her tendency to melancholy by using biblical language and by framing these conflicts in dramatic (and doctrinally solid) images. She had become, in her own private way, an excellent writer of the self and its troubles.

4.16 Conclusions

Having come to the end of this chapter, let us now try to come to some basic conclusions as to the significance of this work in its time, and its specific representation of motherhood.

First of all, we must observe that the most salient aspect of this book is the unconditional love of the husband for the wife (Anthony's love for Elizabeth), still rather uncommon in its public and explicit nature in the seventeenth century, but which was beginning to be socially appreciated as a good marker of family affection and stability. This love is certainly framed and even made possible by a specific institutional frame (the Church of England) but, as we have seen, it need not be any less sincere because of that. The division of the respective texts, the husband's and the wife's, in separate sections and especially their different styles, shows us that there has been no literary ventriloquism going on, or at least not in a way that is significant. The work could be compared to the afore-mentioned publication by

Samuel Clarke, *A Looking Glass for Good Women*[133], where-it is true- there are many words of admiration towards his wife, but Clarke's admiration is incomparable to what we've witnessed in *The Virtuous Wife* by Anthony Walker, especially because Clarke's text is not based on his wife's writings. In that regard, Mr. Walker text is an exception; as far as we know, no other husband at that point had published something that his wife had written while interpolating texts by his own hand.

Secondly, Elizabeth Walker used her writing, in her own parts of the book, to build up a private definition of herself as a mother. In that unique space, she was able to write about her tortuous temptations and her grief when she lost her children; but also about her way of confronting melancholy and the use she made of time she reached a space of full intimacy. The words that are dedicated to her daughters and to her only grandchild are, as we have seen, full of tenderness and love, and are less subject to a literary or allegorical treatment than those of her husband. This is perhaps the main function that writing brought to the configuration of female protestant writers: it allowed for the formation of subjectivity though the text, even if that subjectivity was based on the essential tenets of the protestant faith.

Thirdly, in her text we repeatedly see Elizabeth exerting herself in order not to complain too much of the losses she constantly suffers: losing all the children she once conceived is God's will, and she cannot complain about it, or even less blame Him. She accepts providentially and doctrinally that the believer must adapt him/herself to the will of God, and maintains her desire to do so even when it occurs through a painful acceptance of tragic losses. That effort creates subjectivity, and that subjectivity manifests itself in her private writings. And the sense of privacy and intimacy is indeed essential to her parts of the book: she told to her husband not to read her papers and he (if we believe him) kept them hidden from view until her death in February 1690; only when she had passed away did Anthony dare to read them and publish a part of them. That sense of intense privacy is a cultural product of Protestantism, and here we see an elegant example of it.

Finally, the attention to domesticity, to the education her children and even to medicine were strongly tied together for Mrs. Walker, and for many women at the time. The diary helps us to understand better what books were used by women to

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[133] There is an online version, thanks to EEBO (Early English Books Online). Clarke, Samuel: *A Looking Glass for Good Women*. London, 1677. https://quod.lib.umich.edu/e/eebo2/A79898.0001.001/1:2?rgn=div1;view=toc. Accessed 15th October 2023.

learn about the practice of medicine, in the same way that the prayer books mentioned in the diary let us know what was the devotional framework in which the family lived, always with a well-ordered sense of everyday time. The education of her children was undertaken by Mrs. Walker as an essential part of her many duties at the household, and she used the Bible as well as some other pious books to teach the children and servants how to read and write. Literacy and religious education are presented to us as occurring simultaneously, in a vivid example of what everyday life was for a seventeenth-century middle-class, socially active family.

This remarkable work goes beyond the mere description of the life of a mother in the 17th century. It is actually a love story told by two people at the same time: one (the wife) is dead, but leaves a legacy in writing; the other (the husband) is alive, and comments on the legacy of the former, enriching her work and expressing his deep admiration for her. Together, they seem to confirm the validity of the cultural project that was the nuclear family in the seventeenth century: a model that certainly belongs to its time and place, and also to its specific institutional context (the Church of England), but which allowed for the development of a strong form of written subjectivity for mothers such as Elizabeth Walker.

Conclusions

I Several Answers to the Initial Questions

This thesis has examined several case studies that attempt to illuminate the circumstances in which seventeenth-century English mothers found themselves. The lives and writings of Elizabeth Grymeston, Elizabeth Joscelin, and Elizabeth Walker are representative examples of a complex socio-religious landscape, marked by the coexistence of competing theological frameworks, the slowly (but steady) rise of female literacy, and an urgent need to leave moral and spiritual legacies for their children. These case studies have proven essential for addressing the questions outlined in the introduction, offering a portrait of early modern motherhood as shaped by faith, the expectations of society, and the existential proximity of death.

The first research question made in the introduction was the following: **Was there a common pattern in the representations of motherhood that women elaborated through their private writings in seventeenth-century England?**

Although the answer is determined by the kind of private documentation that we tackle, we can certainly state that there were similar patterns of behavior among seventeenth-century English mothers. The study cases depicted here show that religion was of the utmost importance: the salvation of the soul and the rightful conduct is the main concern among Joscelin, Grymeston and Walker. Prayers, references to the Bible (whether King James Version-KJV- or the Geneva Bible-GNV) and admonitions regarding the correct moral education of the child are constantly present in their legacies, as we have seen throughout this work.

The masculine presence is consistently evident, albeit articulated through distinct frameworks in each mother. In the case of Elizabeth Grymeston, the 1606 edition of her work was probably altered by her husband, Christopher Grymeston, considering that she had passed away in 1603 and that the book was originally published posthumously in 1604. He expanded the initial fourteen chapters by adding six additional ones, thus augmenting the structure to twenty sections in

total (Matchinske, 2002; Goulding, 2024).[134] In Joscelin's case, it was not her husband but Thomas Goad—a family friend and editor of the 1624 publication—who significantly altered the 1622 manuscript. In the case of Elizabeth Walker, it was her husband, Anthony Walker, who chose to publish her writings in 1690, selectively cutting and reshaping sections, while interweaving his own reflections and commentary. Although male figures intervened in the editorial process, their role did not suppress or overshadow the voice of these women. Instead, they acted as facilitators of transmission, allowing the texts to be published and circulated, even if occasionally reframed, or cut, or re-shaped through their own perception. The authorial traits and spiritual intention (and character) of these works remained intact.

Despite acknowledging their subordinate position within a patriarchal hierarchy, these women were not deterred from writing. On the contrary, they remained deeply committed to the duty that nature and God had entrusted to them: to nurture the souls of their children -even when death prevented them from nurturing their bodies. Deprived by death of their physical presence as mothers, these women became *textual mothers*[135] committed to fulfilling their maternal duty through the legacies they left behind. In a society structured by rigid hierarchies, the convergence of maternal authority and the imminence of death provided the necessary conditions for these texts to be published, as evidenced in the three cases under study. Elizabeth Walker, though not solely a writer of legacies, left a touching testament to her only surviving descendant, her grandson Johnny (1690: 270–295). Furthermore, these final words, this closeness to death, bestowed upon mothers the *auctoritas* -or maternal agency- required to command obedience from her children.

Therefore, the following common patterns can be identified across the studied cases: first, the emphasis on teaching true religion (which was different for each mother) during turbulent times when religious identity was crucial; second, the justification for writing stemming both from the imminence of death and the authority associated with motherhood; and third, the undeniable presence of a male figure in each instance.

The second question was related to the implications of Protestantism or Catholicism in the way mothers approached maternity: **To what an extent did the religious context influence and/or determine the models of motherhood through**

[134] For further references, consult chapter two of this thesis; the analysis of Beilin (1990) or Anselment (2004) are of great importance too.
[135] The term "textual maternity" was first introduced by Heller (2016: 4).

which women represented themselves? What were the specific forms of Protestantism and Catholicism that determined the education of these women, their writings, and the raising of their children?

These questions revolve around the fundamental schism within Christianity between Protestant and Catholic doctrine. It can be argued that the differing approaches to motherhood observed in the three studied cases -and in many others[136]- are deeply rooted in these religious distinctions. Although religion plays an equally central role for Grymeston, Joscelin, and Walker, their varying conceptions of God account for significant divergences in their texts. As discussed in chapter one, Protestantism aligns with the notion of predestined salvation, and therefore life's hardships are to be interpreted as part of God's deliberate and preordained plan. Expressing discontent would imply spiritual nonconformity. This theological stance is reflected in the writings of Joscelin and Walker, where expressions of complaint are notably absent. In contrast, Grymeston's work adopts a more spontaneous tone, interspersed with moments of critique -not only toward her mother but also regarding her own existence.

Furthermore, Grymeston integrates poetic references more extensively than the other two. She draws on figures like Spenser and Robert Southwell, whereas Joscelin, despite Thomas Goud's accounts of her classical education[137], makes minimal use of literary citations. Elizabeth Walker's references, apart from traditional proverbs, are drawn almost exclusively from the Bible.

Puritan women in particular, and Protestant women more broadly, were often confined to a life of isolation, restricted to the domestic sphere. The possibility of escaping marriage and motherhood had been virtually erased following the dissolution of monasteries and religious communities under Thomas Cromwell's orders in 1536 (Morgan: 249). Once married, women were expected to focus on the religious instruction of children and servants, while fulfilling their domestic duties. The Protestant worldview—especially within the more extreme Puritan circles—was oriented inward, emphasizing introspection and household piety over external engagement. Maternal affection was to be expressed primarily through catechetical teaching (McQuade, 2017: 37), within a rigid and hierarchic family frame. Literacy became not only a tool for religious education, but also a subtle form of emotional and intellectual relief from domestic confinement.

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[136] For instance, the diaries written by Elizabeth Mordaunt in 1656-1657.

[137] "In the whole course of her pen, I observe her Piety and Humility; these her lines scarce shewing one sparke of the elementary fire of her secular learning: this her candle being rather lighted from the lamp of the Sanctuary" (Goud, Thomas, quoted in Metcalfe, 2000: 43).

The experience of a recusant Catholic like Elizabeth Grymeston, however, reveals a somewhat different spiritual atmosphere. Her collection of meditations, songs, and poems blends religious instruction with a sensibility that embraces life's emotional and poetic dimensions. Her writings convey a vitality and expressive range largely absent from the stern, often melancholic tone found in the works of Protestant contemporaries such as Joscelin and Walker. The writings of Protestant wmothers, particularly those composed in preparation for death, often convey an austere tone shaped by doctrinal beliefs in human depravity and the corruption of the soul. Their legacies to their children, far from being consoling, sometimes carry a threatening or admonitory tone—reflecting the rigid moral framework of predestined salvation, where divine grace is not earned but bestowed. This spiritual outlook often isolated them emotionally, making their writings appear more sorrowful, solemn, and burdened with spiritual anxiety.

By contrast, Catholic women—including recusants like Elizabeth Grymeston, who lived in Protestant England—embraced a worldview where salvation could be attained through both faith and works, and where forgiveness remained possible despite human fallibility. This doctrine offered a measure of spiritual freedom and emotional relief that is often reflected in their texts. Grymeston's legacy, although composed under duress and in what she perceived as a hostile religious climate, nonetheless contains greater spontaneity, poetic expression, and emotional nuance. In her writings, the maternal voice alternates sorrow with a sense of hope and possibility absent from the more deterministic tone found in the Protestant authors.

The third question was related to the specific cases of Elizabeth Grymeston, Elizabeth Joscelin and Elizabeth Walker: **how does motherhood express itself in the specific cases of Elizabeth Grymeston, Elizabeth Joscelin and Elizabeth Walker, and what is the contribution of each of them to our understanding of the roles of mothers in seventeenth-century England?**

Each author offers a very different articulation of maternal affection, despite the undeniable presence of common trends. Their writings contribute to a broader understanding of motherhood in seventeenth-century England, while simultaneously revealing singular instances of maternal devotion shaped by personal, theological, and cultural circumstances. Since religion impregnates their words, their texts construct a discursive map of spiritual identity, depicting the doctrinal limitations, the emotional landscapes and the social and moral expectations that defined maternal roles in seventeenth-century England.

In the case of Grymeston, she writes (*Miscellanea*, 1604) to her son Bernye with what we could call "spiritual urgency", believing that her death would turn out to

be imminent. Her texts are a blend of excerpts from both Catholic and Protestant sources, proof of her expertise as a compiler, and of her exquisite education. Also, it can be understood as proof of certain taste for life (there are musical passages), and some undeniable joy, although intertwined with a certain degree of anxiety for the salvation of her son's soul. Her moral instruction is enriched with the diversity of authors, poetry and proverbs. In her choices, there is also a depiction of a character that aimed at both spirituality and intellectual curiosity. And, perhaps, the ways in which she used these choices, her compilation, is also proof of maternal authority. She challenged the idea of a passive transmission of information by reshaping the male authors' voices to her own's aims: a tender legacy, another case of maternal textuality, for her only child Bernye.

In the case of Elizabeth Joscelin (*The Mothers Legacie to her Unborne Childe,* 1622), there is a sense of tragedy in her text. We, as readers, can feel the anguish and anxiety (spiritual anxiety) of her voice. The tone is even more urgent than in Grymeston's *Miscellanea*. Among the legacies studied in this thesis, it is the only text addressed to an unknown child, to someone whose face has not been envisaged yet. The goal of her writing is to leave behind, for her still unborn child, a moral, spiritual and practical guidance. She also was concerned about her husband, instructing him on how to raise a child, in case she passed away. The tone of the text can be tasted as intimate, prophetic (she died, eventually), and specially touching. In this particular instance of motherhood, we can glimpse the figure of a mother who embraces her maternal duty with profound devotion, but also with nostalgia and a sense of longing (because she has this premonition of not being able to fulfill her task) for being on her child's side every day, from morning to night, and in order to do so, she builds up a "new" construct, a motherly *Book of Hours*, a guide and a textual companion that her child can consult in moments of doubt, solitude or sorrow. So, Joscelin embodies the maternal presence (or absence) as a spiritual and moral guide, an architect of hours, a tender and textual companion. While reading her, we still can perceive her sense of duty, but also her fragility, fear and desolation.

In Elizabeth Walker's case, we come across a particular case of marital affection mixed with a nuanced and detailed account of the great and small events of life: pregnancies, illnesses in the family, deaths and spiritual reflections. She, through the lenses of her husband, unveils for us the daily life of a Puritan family, as in a detailed and rich painting. She taught her children and servants how to read and pray, how to memorize the scripture and the catechism, and also transcribed medicines, recipes and medicines. She was also (according to her husband) a

generous woman with neighbors and servants, exercising a charitable labor in her community. Piety, private prayer and domestic education is crucial in her embodiment of maternity. We also can discover her resilience as a Puritan mother who disliked complaining: there are only a few words, a glimpse of sadness here and there, that let us understand how profound her grief as mother could have been. She bridged together the roles of healer, educator, spiritual guide and master, and conveyed for us an image of motherhood that is revealing and representative of the Puritan world in seventeenth-century England.

The **fourth question** of this thesis was oriented towards death and motherhood as fundamental justifications for writing: **in which ways were motherhood and death (or closeness to it) intertwining and determining factors for writing in the cases of Grymeston, Joscelin and Walker? Why was it crucial for so many mothers to summarise their attitudes towards life in the form of written legacies?**

Death, as we have stated before, was a decisive impetus for textual production in the cases of Grymeston, Joscelin, and Walker. Facing imminent or potential death, each woman turned to writing as a means of preserving maternal presence beyond physical absence.

As previously discussed, death served as a pivotal catalyst for writing in the cases of Joscelin and Grymeston. In contrast, in Walker's case, death was not the only reason for writing: her writings aimed to recount personal experience rather than to confront immediate mortality. But, even in her case, death played a critical role, particularly in the posthumous recognition and publication of her work. It was her passing that prompted her husband to preserve her legacy—a rare gesture of praise for a woman, rooted in his belief that her virtues as a wife and mother deserved remembrance. In this sense, death becomes not only a narrative theme but a posthumous incentive for textual dissemination.

In the three instances, their role as mothers conferred these women, as it has been stated before, the necessary agency to write. Their maternal bond to their children, linked to the proximity of death (which in the case of Walker would entail only the long letter-that works as a legacy-to her grandson Johnny) legitimated the transgressive act of writing. The goal was preserving maternal presence beyond physical absence, through texts that could comfort, instruct and represent maternal authority simultaneously.

The urgency of a written legacy is a consequence of an unspoken and growing self-confidence. These mothers believed in the essential value, truthfulness, and moral clarity of their message, necessary to undertake the labor of writing. Yet this emerging confidence was carefully veiled in expressions of humility and deference

to social hierarchies. The cases studied yielded and defied at the same time the gender stereotypes of seventeenth-century England.

But this need for writing is also a consequence of a moral (maternal) duty: it responds to an existential and theological imperative. According to the Protestant minister Samuel Hieron, maternal duty was defined by the teaching capacity of the mother: "Q: What is the mother's duty? A. To nourish her children and to instruct them. I Timothy 5.10" (Hieron, 1620, cited in McQuade, 2017: 37). Through these legacies, mothers sought to fulfill her natural responsibility, even beyond death. However, they finally offered not only guidance but a lasting trace of affection and moral presence—an echo of themselves in their children's lives, in a society where maternal death was both feared and, sometimes, inevitable.

The fifth question focuses on the limitations and restraints of these women's writings, but also on the available freedom, if any, of their work: **what were the forms of restraint (social, cultural, religious) in the way in which women such as Grymeston, Joscelin and Walker chose to write about themselves and their relationship with their children? And, conversely, were there any forms of release or relative freedom available to them in their society and culture?**

The restraints that mothers envisaged were also the strengths they relied on. Protestantism and Puritanism, as it has been explained before, did not bestow on women a better position. On the contrary, the female confinement was more acute than ever. The only position that could give women some agency was their role as literate mothers. Isolation, confinement to the household, mixed with a clear rise in literacy (Cressy: 1977, 1980), and the stronger moral (and maternal) duty of teaching, converged into the figure of a *writing* mother. This way, a restriction was transformed into an advantage, and the display of maternal *auctoritas* through the texts became a new literary trend.

The social order, as we have seen, apparently marked a narrow path between the different types of education a woman and a man should have access to[138]. However, some women, like Joscelin or Grymeston, received an exceptional education. Margaret Roper (Thomas More's eldest daughter), whose mastering of Latin and her remarkable translations from Latin to English were extraordinary, was another instance of profitable female education. Transgressive as it was, they looked for justifications to the very act of depicting the most important lessons of life, as well as they, sometimes (as in Joscelin's case) tried to carefully mask their extraordinary and unique education. Thus, while cultural and social limitations

[138] Luis Vives explains very well the different aims of education regarding girls in *The Education of a Christian Woman* (1523:58).

placed considerable constraints on women's modes of expression, they also paradoxically enabled a rise in female literacy. The very systems that restricted women's intellectual freedom often produced the circumstances that allowed their engagement with textual authorship.

II A Definition of Motherhood

Throughout this journey, much has been explored about mothers and the performance of motherhood, and this thesis is aimed to give a final answer to that first question that we started with: What constituted motherhood in Seventeenth-century England? What do we mean exactly by this, in this exact historical context? What are the main traits that characterize the performance of motherhood by our early modern female ancestors?

Although the experience on motherhood was diverse, since seventeenth-century English women's maternity was influenced by different socio-economic and religious circumstances, we could state that raising children was something desirable for the majority of females: "To conceive with child is the earnest desire if not of all yet of most women" (Sharp, 1671: 93, cited in Crawford, 2004: 95). What was this process like?

Firstly, conception was expected to occur in strict limits of wedlock. Being pregnant out of marriage was a disgrace for both child and mother, and adultery in a marriage was harshly punished. In fact, "adultery" was just a term used for women. When men committed it, it was called "fornication", and it implied a less severe penalty. Adultery, however, was paid by death penalty by a Parliamentary act in 1650 (Crawford, 2004: 85). The pregnancy out of wedlock was followed by female attempts of forcing the father to marry. The more friends, witnesses and family the mother had, the better. If persuasion failed, the only way out for the unwanted baby was infanticide[139] or (if the child was luckier) being brought up in an institution, with the life-long stigma of being an orphan. So, if a woman wanted a dignified pregnancy, she had to be cautious in her virginity and faithful in her marriage.

Secondly, a woman had to be able to conceive. She had to be fruitful. To do so, there was a proliferation of publication of medical treatises, studied in the first

[139] There are excellent studies on infanticide. In 1624, James I issued the Infanticide Statute, that prohibited the assassination of newborn children (Botelho, 2008: 111). But the murdering of children outside wedlock was a fact for unmarried women, who raised suspicion. The study of some interesting particular cases has also been already carried out (Travitsky, 1994: 55-79), as well as more general studies (Gowing, 1997: 87-115).

chapter of this thesis. Barrenness, in general, was solely attributed to mothers (Crawford, 2004: 93). Although the knowledge that women possessed regarding pregnancy and childbirth was widespread and useful, as we have seen in Elizabeth Walker's case, the growing number of these treatises, written in general by men, dismissed or marginalized popular maternal knowledge (Crawford, 2004: 84). However, the difficulties for finding a doctor made midwives and other female ladies[140] take control of the situation, exercising and preserving communal wisdom.

Thirdly, the mother was the ultimate responsible for the **nourishment of her child**, whether through the delegation of it to wetnurses or by undertaking the duty of breastfeeding her own child. Evidence suggests that mothers that belonged to less accommodated classes used to take care of the children themselves. By breastfeeding their own infants, they achieved two significant outcomes: the periods between pregnancies were longer and there was an improvement in the child's health. As Jane Sharp (1671) put it: "The usual way for rich people is to put forth their children to nurse, but that is a remedy that needs a remedy" (Sharp, 1671: 353). This practice showed a detachment from maternal intimacy and worsened the life expectancy of children.

In fourth place, the nourishment of the soul was equally, if not even *more*, important than the nourishment of the body. Piety and a sense of spirituality supposed the key maternal inheritance for the enfants. As previously discussed, religion profoundly shaped mentalities and conformed child-rearing practices. In seventeenth-century England, perhaps more than ever, we see a rise in the belief of a moral duty that the mother builds up towards the child, and this necessity must be fulfilled even beyond death. That is the fundamental reason behind the proliferation of advice literature: they supposed an *elongation* of the motherly faculties. Writing became a powerful tool for mothers, not only for reading the Bible to their children, but also to impose their *auctoritas* to them even in their absence, and to demand obedience. Catechisms (McQuade, 2017) and books of prayers were indisputably essential to the self-imposed task of creating Catholics[141] or Protestants. The heightened self-esteem that was behind this growing need of leaving spiritual guidance behind, can be understood as an essential consequence of the Renaissance, that beyond doubt existed for women.[142]

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[140] They were called "gossips" (Capp, 2003).

[141] This is the title of an excellent book that explores Catholicism in France. Carter, Karen E.: *Creating Catholics. Catechism and Primary Education in Early Modern France,* University of Notre Dame, 2011.

[142] I am referring here to the famous article called "Did women have a Renaissance?" (Gadol 2013).

In the fifth place, the articulation of motherhood in the Seventeenth-century England was also linked to the male figures that surrounded her. This concept of "new mother" that Erasmus popularized in the sixteenth century (Rummel, 1996: 156-173) was developed in a society where women "remained rigidly subordinated to male authority" (Travitsky, 1980, cited in Botelho, 2008: 114). So, even though evidence is suggesting a more vivid agency, a more solid and growing inner confidence, mothers in their writings still comply with the pervasive, dominant social order. In fact, all the texts that have been analyzed have a common trait; the intervention and attempts of alteration, reshape and filtration by the males that were around these mothers. So, as asserted before, mothers are transgressive by writing, but only to a certain extent. However, the very performative act of writing (that can be described as innovative, powerful and enduring) outlines the beginning of a long trajectory towards a wider appropriation (and authority) over the "self", and, consequently, a more complete maternal understanding, perhaps a more personal and careful guidance in the future decades. By the adoption of the written word, women will expand their roles beyond domestic milieu and will create the foundation for broader intellectual *auctoritas*, carving space for maternal voices within social and textual realms.

To summarize, the perfect prototype of mother in the seventeenth-century England breastfeeds her children, obeys her husband, teaches reading and (less frequently) writing, as well as catechisms and prayer books to her infants (and also to the servants), takes care of the household and of the domestic environment (even by commanding properly to the service) with efficiency and authority, and she is fertile, virtuous, pious and faithful. These, as general assumptions, can be taken into consideration for both Catholic and Protestant.

Nevertheless, Protestant women, as evidence suggests, were more anxious, more rigorously bound to internalized doctrines, taught (among others) by Tyndale's and Cranmer's teachings, less permissive with children's faults, and much more concerned about salvation and death. Poetic texts or literary excerpts were rarely used in the analyzed works. Complaining to God was considered as a sign of theological dissent and a proof of spiritual nonconformity.

These traits need not to be only applied to biological mothers: as death was so pervasive remarriages were abundant, and stepmothers were an accepted reality. However, tension was stronger between mother and stepchild, as can be analyzed in the letters by Elizabeth Wood to her stepmother, Katherine Oxenden, in Appendix 2 (Fol. 115, Ad. Ms. 28004).

Although motherhood remains an elusive concept, it is in the seventeenth century that one may begin to sketch its first definitional contours. While Philippe Ariès[143] defended the birth of infancy in the seventeenth century, I modestly believe that, as one birth can not happen without the other, the seventeenth century (similarly) served as the cradle for newly emergent notions of motherhood (Ariès, 1962: 33-49). The maternal figure -as moral guide, educator, caretaker, and spiritual authority- began to take shape in ways that resonate with contemporary understandings of motherhood. Tenderness was, at least, and at last, described, and these new mothers felt the urgency of a motherly duty far beyond the grave. That is one of the reasons why the seventeenth century can be considered even today as a foundational century of modernity.

III Further Research

Although this thesis has confined its scope to three specific instances of motherhood within the more ample historical context of seventeenth-century England, numerous additional angles deserve scholar attention and further research. The maternal figure, both as a cultural and social construct but also as a lived experience, continues to evolve, offering new light to the public, and seventeenth-century England presents fertile ground for deeper research.

In the case of Elizabeth Grymeston, a study of the works that she cites in their original creation, compared with the reshaping that she performs over these said texts in her own *Miscellanea* (1604), would be very clarifying for both historians and philologists. Grymeston's editorial voice, selective citation, and interpretive strategies deserve closer scrutiny as part of a broader reconsideration of female intellectual authorship in the period.

In the same vein, the Walkers' book (1690) deserves a detailed, annotated, and careful edition. It has been only partially addressed through different mentions in more general works (Crawford, 1998: 94, 102) or through scattered articles (Anselment, 2019), but as a unique example of marital love and for a vivid depiction of a Protestant family in seventeenth-century England, the publication of this intertwined work could be a challenging, but beautiful, task.

Regarding Joscelin, curiosity made me want to know what had become of that only child for whom her tragic legacy had been made. Her name was Theodora (Joscelin's hopes and dreams of having a minister in the family vanished with the birth of a daughter, instead of a son), and she had several children. She married

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Samuel Fortery in 1647, and they had a daughter.[144] Did Theodora read her mother's legacy? Did she ever apply those prudent and wise admonishments to her early life? Further investigation into this topic could reveal itself as fascinating. But there are other attractive inquiries.

Some documentation found while searching for private letters turned out to be very attractive for further research and publication. For example, the letters from Elizabeth Wood to her stepmother, belonging to the Oxenden family[145], could be studied as an instance of familial relationship: in this particular case, from a stepdaughter to her stepmother. There is only one study, published in 1933 (Gardiner, 1933). Although the archival work displayed by James Daybell (2001, 2006) is astonishing, there are still many private documentations that need revision and reassessment.

If a comparative analysis were to be conducted among the European countries impacted by the wound of religious schism in the seventeenth century, focusing on the diverse representations of motherhood according to their cultural and religious traits, I believe the results could prove more than revealing. Seventeenth-century France, for instance, was immersed in religious tensions, and these different ideologies significantly shaped the mental constructions and the performances of motherhood among French mothers. The case of Madame de Sévigné (1626-1696)[146], particularly compelling, has been studied in her convergence of motherhood and writing, but her religious dimension, especially regarding her engagement with Jansenism, remains underexamined. And Sévigné, with her perceptions and texts on Jansenism, and her display and exceptional writings as mother, offers a unique perspective that could enrich a larger and broader comparative study on motherhood and spiritual mapping in early modern Europe.

Madame de Sévigné exerted a profound influence and impact on major literary figures of literature that need to be addressed; La Fayette, Mary Shelley, Proust or Virginia Woolf are just some examples of the prodigious writers over whom Sévigné had a deep impact, and it deserves closer scholarly attention. Equally needed is a profound study on Sévigné's dedication and engagement with

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[144] There are two records online on genealogy: https://familytree.chasegray.co.uk/3130.htm. And also "History of the Foxcroft and Bruce Families", 2021.
http://family.foxcroft.com.au/getperson.php?personID=I3634&tree=tree2. Accessed on 11th July 2025.
Accessed on July 11th, 2025.

[145] Fol. 111 & 115. Add MS 28004.

[146] There is uncountable academic literature, but perhaps the researcher that has focused the most on her role as mother has been Michèle Longino Farrell: *Performing Motherhood. The Sévigné Correspondence*. University Press of New England, 1991.

Jansenism. Blaise Pascal and Pierre Nicole were among her favorite readings[147]. Yet, aside from the 1930 study by Sister Marie Ursule Sanchagrin (now, regrettable unavailable), this issue remains underexplored. I think that a broader investigation would help both to acquire a wider knowledge of Sévigné's maternal discourse and spiritual trends and, at the same time, of Jansenism and the religious impact of the Seventeenth century on ways of mothering.

Furthermore, France has posed a genuine and special attention on motherhood and infancy. One of the most compelling contributions to the history of motherhood was written by Yvonne Knibielher and Catherine Fouquet. The title was Histoire des mères (1982). But, despite its 359 pages, it cannot encompass the vast and still evolving knowledge we do have today in motherhood. Very recently (2023), another book, aimed at a general audience, that attempts to embrace the diversity of maternal identities across time, has been published, but again, it lacks a profound approach to maternity:[148] its 252 pages fall short to accomplish the enormous task of tackling the holistic processes of maternal relationships, from prehistoric origins to contemporary complexities.

As for infancy, foundational studies have (in fact) created the historiography of childhood (Gélis, 1978, 1991; or Ariès, 1962), but the field would greatly benefit from renewed scholar compromise, specially from an interdisciplinary perspective. As an example, the work done by Anne French on infancy (2020) is more than inspiring.

The case of France, that I have explored with particular interest, offers many alternatives and numerous paths for further research. For instance, in the field of medicine, there was a specially compelling, attractive and pioneer midwife, Louise Bourgeuois, who was the author for the first treatise on pregnancy created by a woman. In 1609, Louise Bourgeois published Observations diverses sur la stérilité, where she described herself as "the first woman practicing my art to take up the pen". This work, was largely successful and was expanded with further enlarged editions in 1617, 1626, and 1634[149]. This proved the warm reception it deserved and the grade of its relevance, in a society where most of the birth giving care still

[147] For example, on letter 128 to her daughter Marguerite : « Nous allons commencer un livre de M. Nicole; si j'étois à Paris, je vous enverrois ce livre (…) » The later comments on Nicole show that Sévigné sent it to Marguerite and that they enjoyed discussing over him. Sévigné, Madadme de: *Lettres*. Tome 1. 1644-1675. La Pléiade. Paris, 1953. P. 325.

[148] Fournier, Martine & Peltier, Cécile. Les Mères. *La grande histoire de la maternité. De la préhistoire à nous jours*. Sciences Humaines Éditions, 2023.

[149] Dunn, Peter M. "Louise Bourgeois (1563–1636): royal midwife of France". *Archives of disease in childhood. Fetal and neonatal edition.* 89. Pp. 185-7. 2004.

relied on women. Although Wendy Perkins[150] has worked brilliantly on her and other attractive books related to the art of midwifery and motherhood, I believe that a new annotated edition of Louis Bourgeois' work would mean more than a welcome contribution to the academic milieu.

There are other cases of literature and maternity (lesser known but profoundly significant) that I would have liked to address, and that I believe deserve further attention. Catherine des Roches (1542-1587) and her mother Madeleine des Roches (1520-1587) maintained a very close bond, reinforced by the fact of writing together a collaborative "body" of work that includes poetry, dialogues and letters. They even died on the same day.[151] Their case is a unique instance of close mother-daughter intimacy, and intellectual partnership. Despite their remarkable contributions, they still remain quite unknown to the general public. They deserve renewed scholar (and general) attention, if we want to build up a better understanding of seventeenth-century motherhood.

The old age, a subject both appealing and somehow forgotten and overlooked (except for some scholars like Marsha Urban-2002,2006-, or, more recently, Francesca Blanch-2024), deserve fresher and stronger scholar attention, particularly through the lens of Madame de Lambert's La Vieillesse, written in 1732. She offered through this treatise a profound philosophical reflection on aging from the feminine perspective, challenging the social and cultural invisibility often imposed on elderly women. Lambert also contributed meaningfully on the art of maternal textuality, and she wrote in 1728 Avis d'une mère à sa fille, a concise yet profound educational legacy. A closer examination to both works could contribute to the articulation of maternity and female wisdom in France.

Motherhood has been studied from many perspectives[152], but sometimes these studies are fragmented, belonging to polyhedric compendia, or to a more general works on women. A general encyclopedia that could ease the work to researchers would be a fabulous tool for researchers and academics from all fields. Doing so, the legal constructions, the medical treatises, the known diarists, letter-writers or poets, art or economy would be together. The result could be a magnificent work that would cover many still unknown (or unrelated) aspects of motherhood. An

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[150] Perkins, Wendy: *Midwifery and Medicine in Early Modern France*. University of Exeter Press. Devon, 1996.

[151] Larsen, Anne R. "Legitimizing the Daughter's Writing: Catherine Des Roches' Proverbial Good Wife." *The Sixteenth Century Journal*, vol. 21, no. 4, 1990, pp. 559–74.

[152] For instance, five years ago appeared a book that attempts to define and understand motherhood today: a brave aim but a difficult task: Portier-Le Cocq, Fabienne: *Motherhood in Contemporary International Perspective. Continuity and Change*. Routledge, 2020.

example of this total, ambitious historical work is the Spanish Encyclopedia on Cervantes, with twelve volumes and more than 120 experts on the field.[153]

I hope that these suggestions can encourage or inspire more fruitful, powerful research on one of the fundamental experiences of women: becoming a mother. And I hope you, dear reader, feel the same urge to seek out the "new old women" -perhaps forgotten or unnamed- but without whom our present world would not exist. Their voices may have been lost in the margins, but their legacies deserve to be read, recovered, and remembered. Our gratitude is with them.

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Appendixes

Appendix 1. Maternal and private letters

The aim of this appendix is to show the reader some of the private letters and documents that have been used in this thesis. These are private, intimate letters, that reflect the worries, tensions, but also the daily lives in seventeenth-century English women. They are just a brief sample of all the documentation seen and photographed. Perhaps the most relevant in this selection could be letter numbers 3 and 4, since they reflect the tension between a stepmother and a stepdaughter. The manuscripts belong to the British Library (see the previous bibliography for more information), and the transcriptions are mine.

A) Letter 1

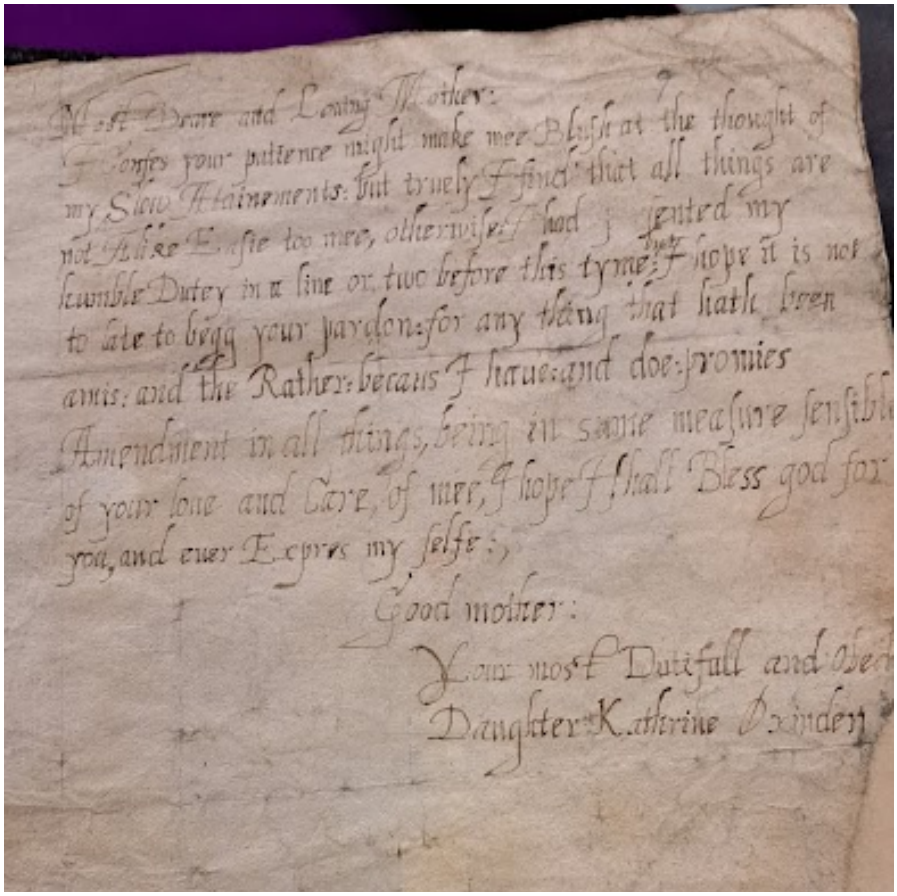


Figure Ap. 1. Letter from Katherine Oxenden, sister to Henry Oxenden, of Barham, to her mother. Absence of date, but they were written before 1642. Fol. 9. Add. Ms. 28004. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

Transcription of Letter 1

Most deare and Loving mother:

I confes your patience might make mee blush at the thought of my slow attainments: but truly I find that all things are not alike easie too mee, otherwise I had sented my humble dutey in a line or two before this time ; that I hope it is not too late to begg your pardon for anything that hath been amis: and the rather becaus I have and doe; promise amendment in all things, being in same measure sensible of your love and care of mee, I hope I shall bless God for you, and ever express myself:,

Good mother

Your most Dutifull and obedient

Daughter Katherine Oxinden

B) Letter 2

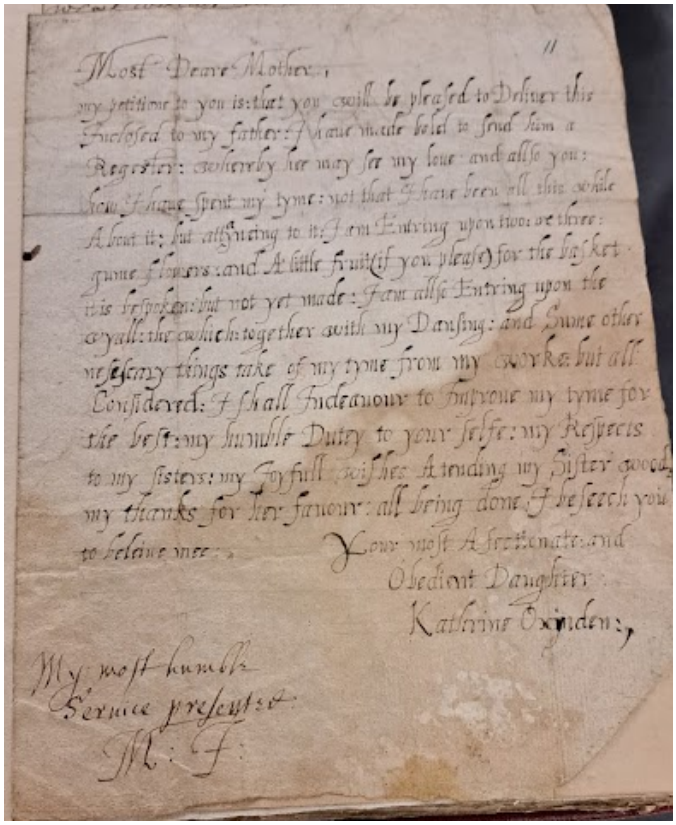


Figure Ap. 2. Letter from Katherine Oxenden to her mother. Fol 11. Add. MS. 28004. Although there is no date, it was written before 1642. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

Transcription of Letter 2

Most Deare Mother:

My petition to you is that you will be pleased to deliver this inclosed to my father: I have made bold to send him a register: whereby he may see my love and also you: how I have spent my time: not that I have been all this while about it: but attayneing to it: I am Entring upon two or three: gum[e] flowers: and a little fruit (if you please) for the basket it is bespoken: but not yet made: I am also entring upon the wyall [?]: the which together with my dancing and some other necessary things take of my time from my work: but all considered: I shall endeavour to improve my time for the best: my humble duty to your selfe: my respects to my sisters: my joyful wishes attending my sister Wood *My thanks for her favour: all being done: I beseech you to believe me.*

Your most affectionate and obedient daughter:

Katherine Oxynden

My most humble service presented: M: F:

C) Letter 3

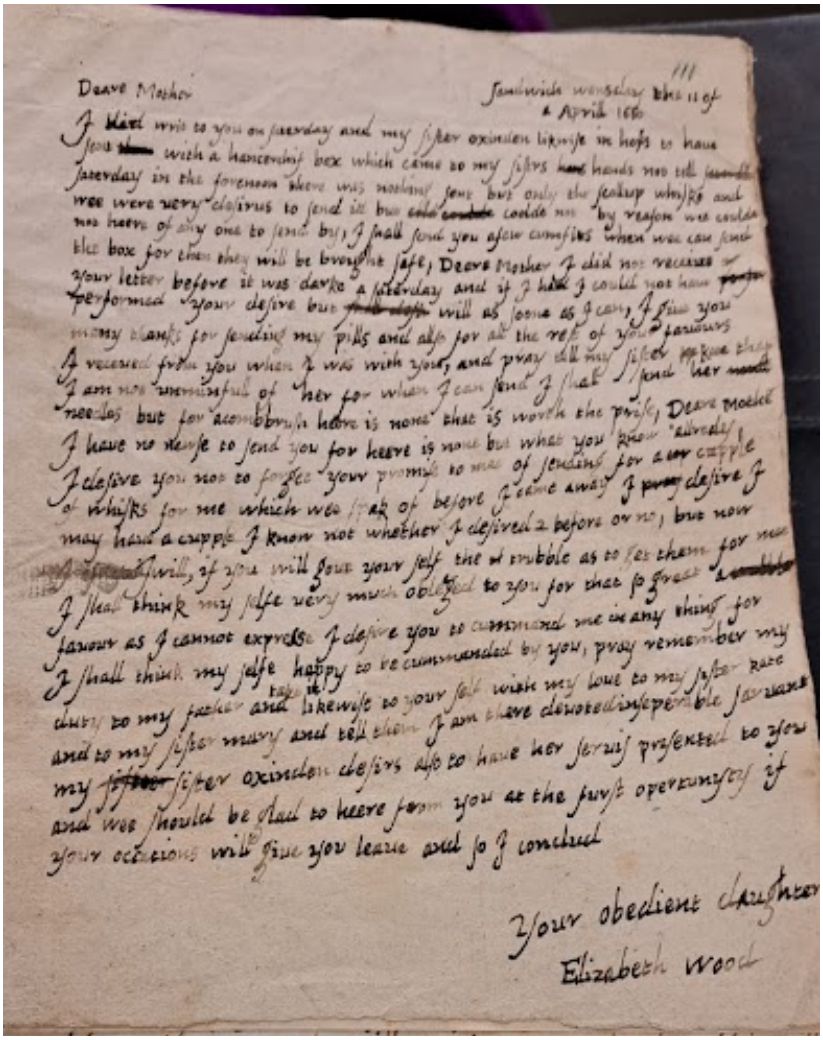


Figure Ap. 3. A letter from Elizabeth Wood to her stepmother, Katherine Culling. 11th April 1660. BL. Fol. 111. Add. MS. 28004. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

Transcription of Letter 3

Sandwich wensday the 11 of Aprill 1660

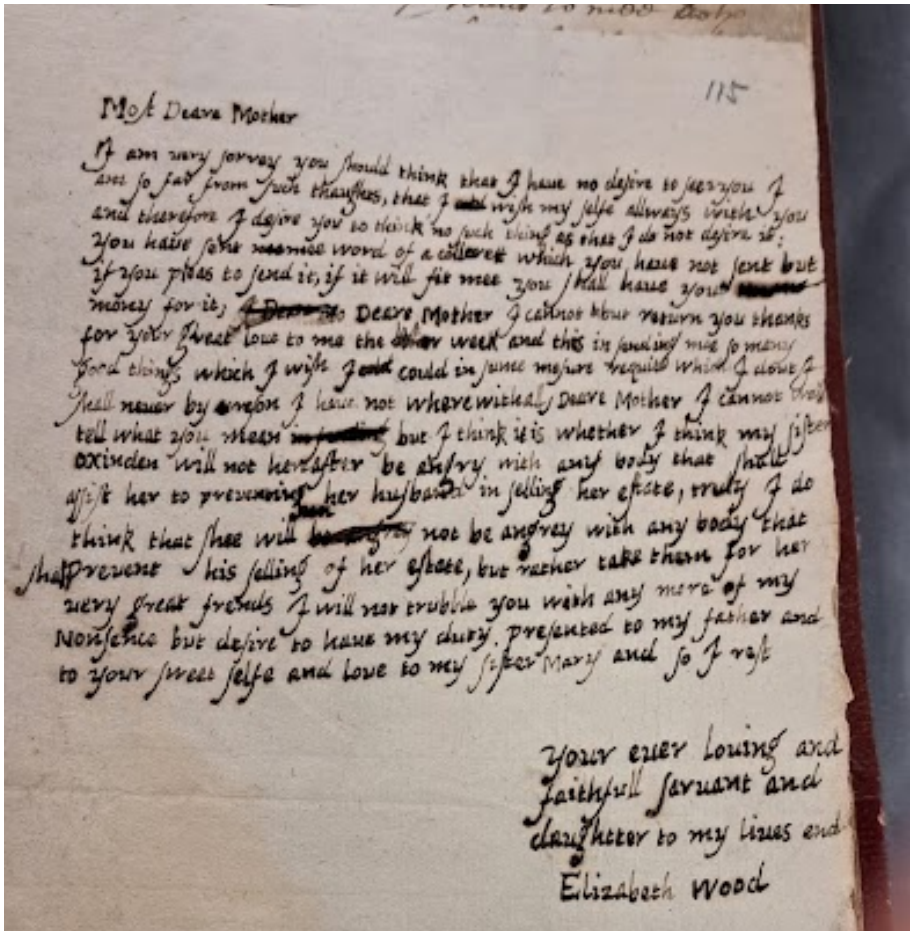
Deare Mother:

I writ to you on Saterday and my sister Oxinden likewise in hopes to have sent with a hancerchif box which came to my sister's hands not tell Saturday in the forenoon where was nothing sent but only the sealed up (seolupp) whiske and wee were very desirus to send it but coolde not by reason wee coolde not heere of anyone to send by. I shall send you a few comfits when we can send the box for then they will be brought safe. Deare mother I did not receive your letter before it was darke a Saturday and if I had I could not have performed your desire but will as soone as I can. I give you many thanks for sending my pills and also for all the rest of your favours I received from you

when I was with you, and pray tell my sister Kate that I am not unmindful of her for when I can send I shall send her needles but for accombbruss [a comb-brush] here is none that is worth the price. Dear mother I have no news to send you for heere is none but what you know already. I desire you not to forget you promise to me of sending for a cupple of whisks for me which wee spar of before I came away. I desire I may have a cupple. I know not whether I desired 2 before or no, but now I will, if you will gave yourself the trouble (trubble) as to get them for me. I shall think myself very much obliged to you for that so great favour as I cannot expresse. I desire you to command me in anything for I shall think myself happy to be commanded by you, pray remember my duty to my father and take it likewise to yourself with my love to my sister Kate and to my sister Mary and tell them I am their devoted inseparable sarvant. My sister Oxinden desires also to have her service presented to you and wee should be glad to heer from you at the furst opportunity if your occasions will give you leave and so I conclude.

Your obedient daughter
Elizabeth Wood.

D) Letter 4



Most Deare Mother

I am very sorrey you should think that I have no desire to see you I am so far from such thoughes, that I wish my selfe always with you and therefore I desire you to think no such things as that I do not desire it. You have sent me word of a collarett which you have not sent but if you pleas to send it, if it will fit mee you shall have your money for it. Deare Mother I cannot but return you thanks for your great love to me the last week and this in sending mee so many good things, which I wish I could in some measure requite which I doubt I shall never by reason I have not where withall. Deare Mother I cannot tell what you mean but I think it is whether I think my sister Oxinden will not hereafter be angry with any body that shall assist her to preventing her husband in selling her estate, truly I do think that she will not be angry with any body that shall prevent his selling of her estate, but rather take them for her very great freends I will not trouble you with any more of my Nonsence but desire to have my duty presented to my father and to your sweet selfe and love to my sister Mary and so I rest

Your euer loving and faithfull servant and daughter to my lives end

Elizabeth Wood

Figure Ap. 4. Elizabeth Wood to her stepmother Katherine. Undated, but previous to 1642. Fol. 115. Add. MS. 28004. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

Transcription of Letter 4

(Note: some words have been modernized in this case)

I am very sorry you should think that I have no desire to see you. I am so far from such thoughts, that I wish myself always with you and therefore I desire you to think no such things as that I do not desire it. You have sent me word of a collarette which you have not sent but if you pleas to send it, if it will fit mee you shall have your money for it. Dear mother I can not but return you thanks for your great love to me the last week and this in sending mee so many good things, which I wish I could in some measure requited which I doubt I shall never by reason I have not where with all. Dear mother I can not tell well what you mean but I think it is whether I think my sister Oxinden will not hereafter be angry with any body that shall assist her to preventing her husband in selling her estate, truly I do think that she will not be angry with anybody that shall prevent his selling of her estate, but rather take them for her very

good friends. I will not trouble you with any more of my nonsense but desire to have my duty presented to my father and to your sweet selfe and love to my sister Mary and so I rest:

Your ever loving and faithful servant and daughter to my lives end.

Elizabeth Wood.

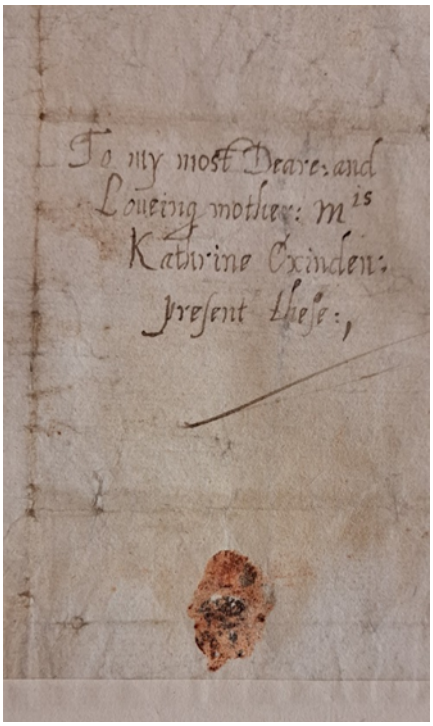


Figure Ap. 5. As envelopes did not exist yet, letters were folded in a certain way so to write down the name of the addressee at the back. Photograph taken by kind permission of the British Library.

Appendix 2. Sections in *The holy Life of Mrs. Elizabeth Walker* (1690)

The aim of this appendix is to show the reader some graphics that correspond to the number of words -and in which section-that correspond to the husband or the wife, in the book studied in chapter four by Anthony Walker, *The holy life of Mrs. Elizabeth Walker* (1690).

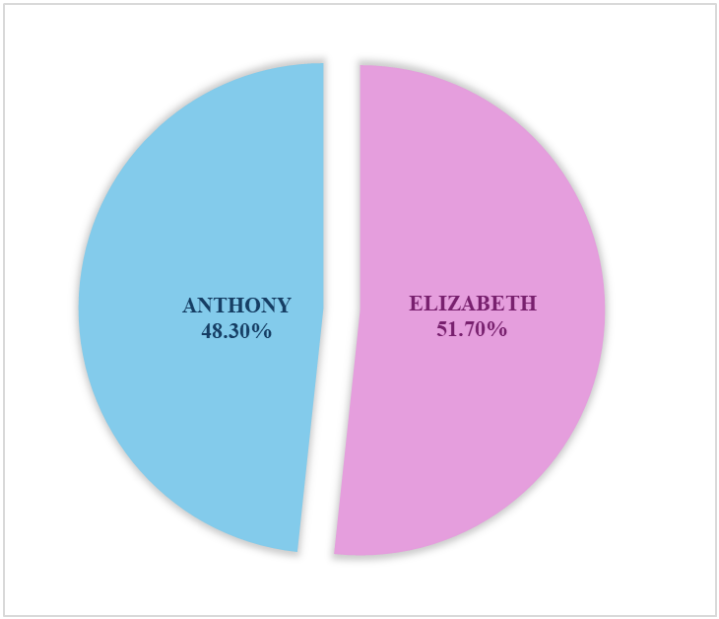


Figure Ap. 6. Total percentage of the contribution of each spouse to the book.

The result of my research comes as expected: the work has been constructed and built up in the same coordinated and cooperative environment that the marriage shared: almost exactly half of it belongs to the husband, and half of it to the wife. The sections, however, are not balanced: some of them, as we have observed, are extremely long, whereas others are, in comparison, very short. The appendix is the longest section of the book, with almost 20,000 words. Regarding chapters, number XXV is the longest, followed by number XVI.

As a whole, it can be inferred a great difference in the style of the husband and the wife, so we could affirm that, even though in some instances some words can have been altered by the husband, in general it can be easily distinguished the excerpts whose authorship belongs to the wife (interspersed by the husband) from those instances that are solely written by him. To ease the understanding of the figures to the reader, some graphics and tables have been created.

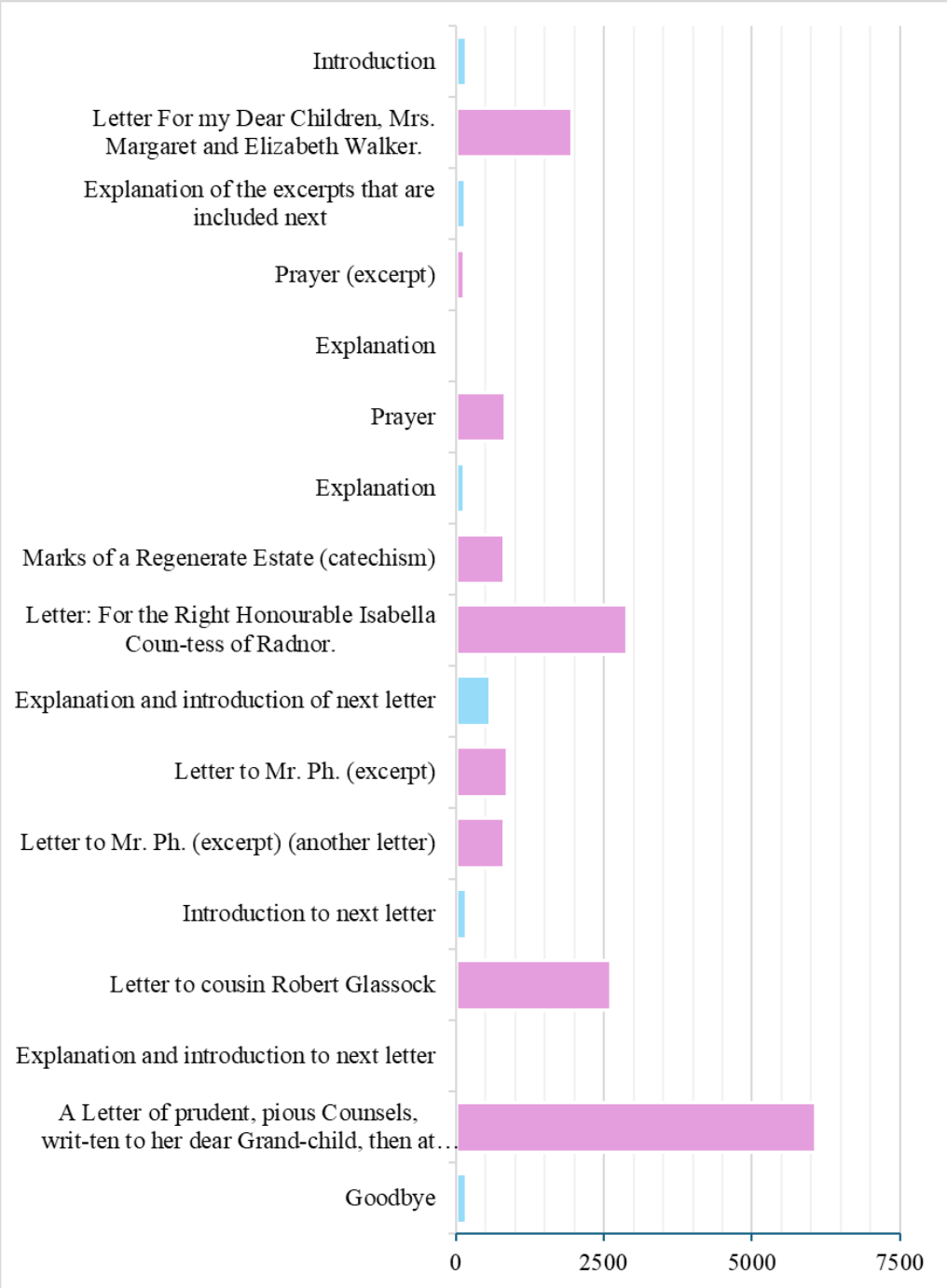


Figure Ap. 7. Contribution of each spouse in the different sections of the Appendix.

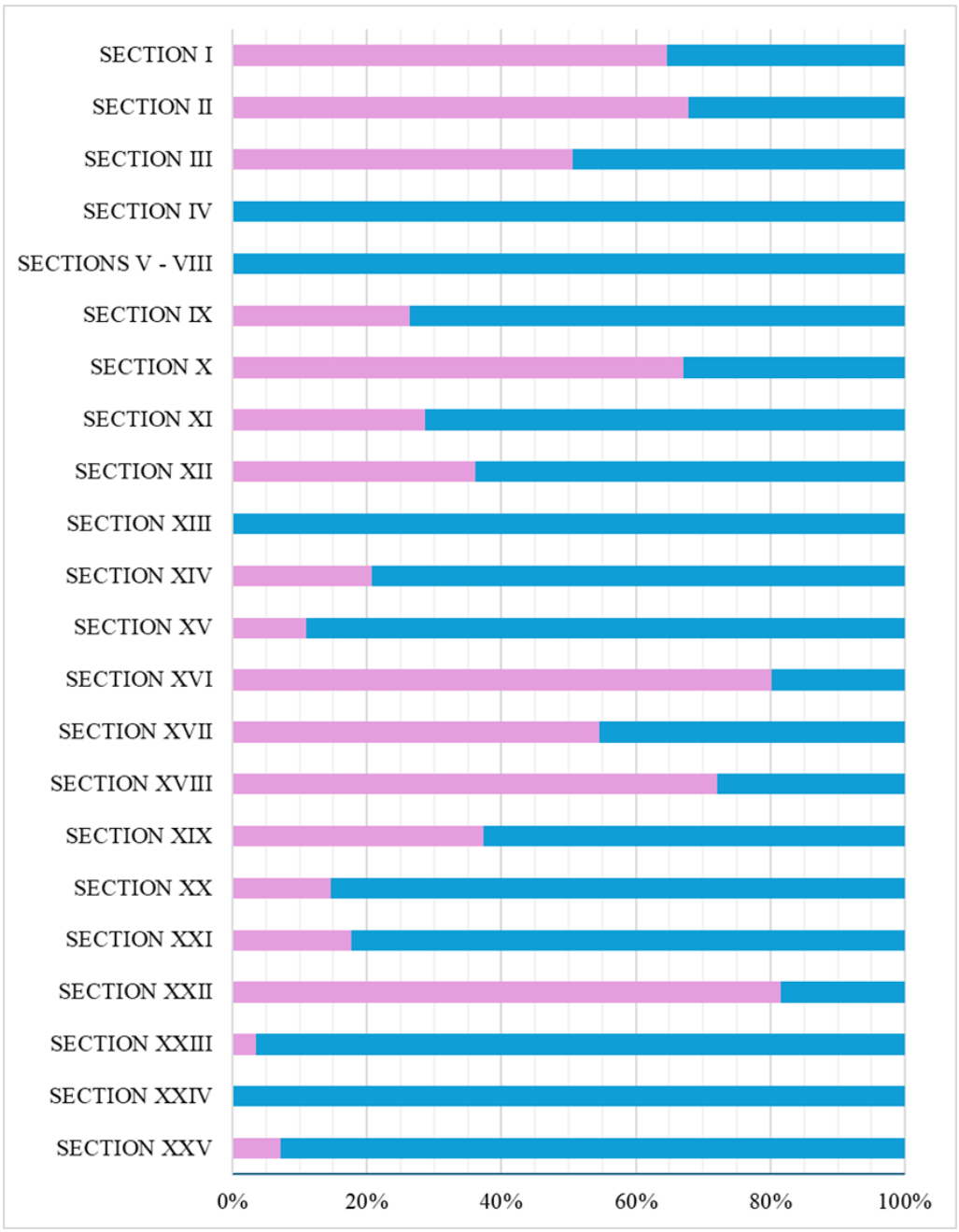


Figure Ap. 8. Contribution of each spouse by sections.

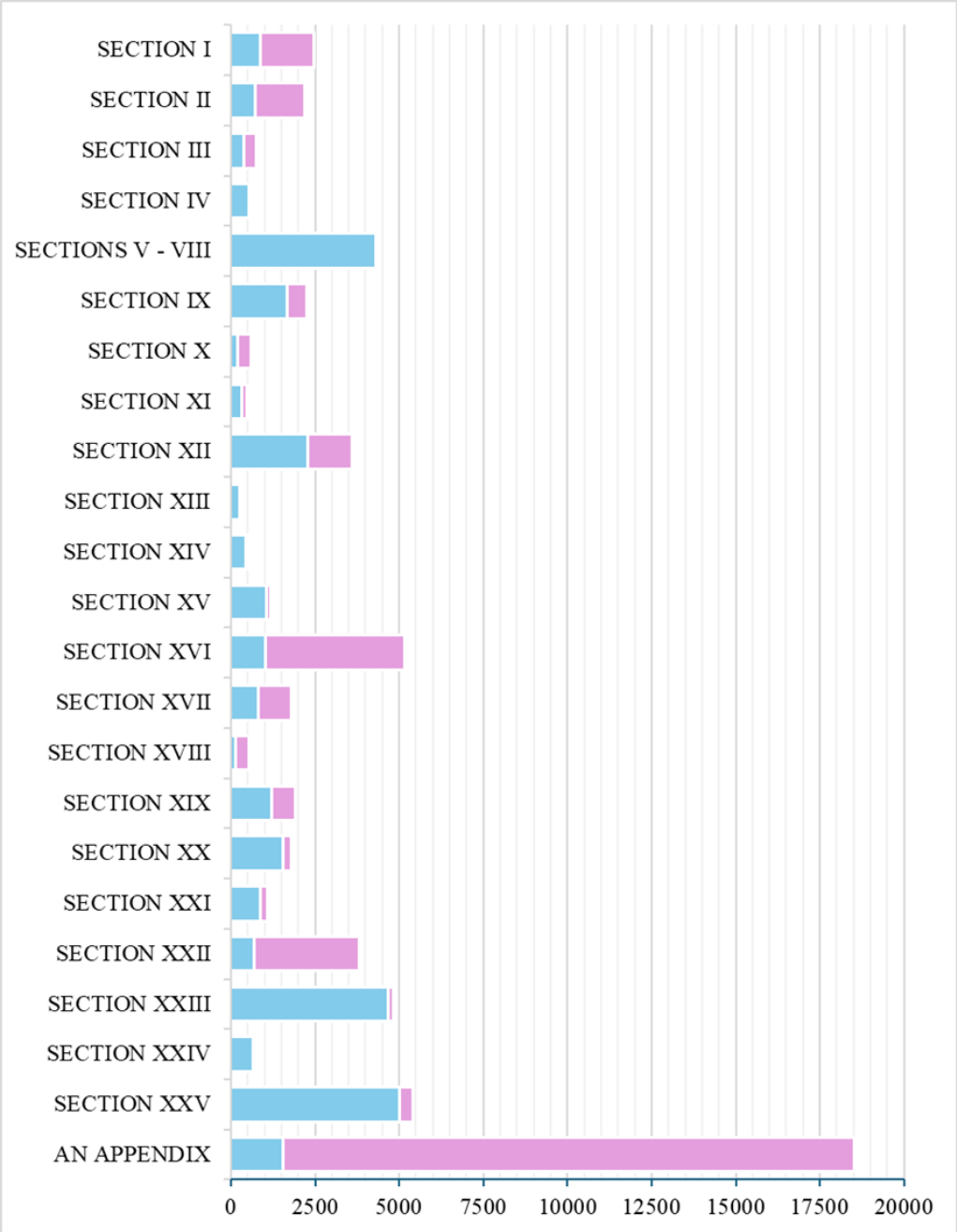


Figure Ap. 9. Length of the sections and contribution of each spouse in the different sections.

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