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“What Was Your Living Mother’s Mind?”

Motherhood as Intellectual Enterprise in Mother’s Legacy Books

I speak about a mother’s thought—the intellectual capacities she develops, the judgments she makes, the metaphysical attitudes she assumes, the values she affirms. A mother engages in a discipline.

—Sara Ruddick, “Maternal Thinking”

I did truly weigh, rightly consider, and perfectly see the great care, labour, travail, and continual study, which Parents take to enrich their children.

—Dorothy Leigh, *The Mothers Blessing*

Written prior to their deaths, between 1603 and 1712, and left to instruct their children, the nine published mother’s legacy books, by Elizabeth Grymeston, Dorothy Leigh, Elizabeth Joscelin, M. R., Elizabeth Richardson, Anne Bradstreet, Susanna Bell, Sarah Goodhue, and Grace Smith stand as Renaissance English and Colonial American women’s responses to motherhood.¹ Feminist literary critics and historians have argued that each of these mothers, in their reliance on social endorsement of their domestic role, has subverted the circumscription of expected female behaviour. The legacy writers gain distance and agency, if not autonomy, from patriarchal codes precisely because they embrace their roles as mother and Christian. I have argued elsewhere that when we read the mother’s legacy books alongside current articulations of feminist theology, the early modern women can be seen as foremothers of today’s theologians, for each legacy writer defines and claims her subjectivity in accordance with her faith, asserts and relies upon the feminist theology of women in community, and finds in her religion the power to suggest socio-political change. If, however, the mother’s legacy

writers deserve critical attention for the authority and progressiveness of their theologies, their articulations of the practice of mothering are equally compelling but largely neglected. I address this critical lacuna as I examine how these women make motherhood more than a domestic service, and how they use discourse about mothering to comment more generally on women's position in their culture. I argue that the mother's legacy writers negotiate motherhood as an intellectual enterprise, that they define motherhood as a way of thinking, a response to the needs and demands that exist outside of the mother and even outside of the child.

I take as my point of reference Sara Ruddick's germinal essay on motherhood as a discipline. In "Maternal Thinking" (1983), Ruddick describes maternal thought as the intellectual work of mothering. Because she describes mothering as a discipline in broad terms meant to speak to the wide general practice of motherhood, my application of Ruddick's twentieth-century theories to early modern culture is not anachronistic. As Ruddick points out, every mother must respond to her society even as she makes choices about raising her child. In Ruddick's view, "a mother asks certain questions rather than others; she establishes criteria for the truth, adequacy, and relevance of proposed answers; and she cares about the findings she makes and can act on. Like any discipline, hers has *characteristic* errors, temptations and goals" (1983: 214). The legacy writers perform these tasks of their discipline within their culture; their books are rich with evidence of maternal care in response to cultural expectations, even as they are marked by different stages of maternal practice. Josceline (1999) writes to an unborn child, Goodhue (1773) to unborn, young and older children, Leigh (1616) and Grymeston (1610) to sons still in school, Bradstreet (1867) and Richardson (1645) to adult children. However, they are markedly similar as their discipline of maternal thought establishes criteria for determining failure and success, then sets priorities as it identifies the virtues and liabilities the criteria presume (Ruddick, 1983: 214). This similarity, I suggest, comes about because the legacy writers centre the goal of maternal thought in their religions and because each must respond to a common set of cultural values and codes. However, as Ruddick points out, sometimes the goals of maternal practice and cultural codes conflict, in which case maternal efforts are directed to ends that are different from dominant public ones. Thus, when Leigh (1616) states in her epistle to her sons, "Wherefore setting aside all feare, I have adventured to shew my imperfections to the view of the world, not regarding what censure shall for this bee laid upon mee, so that heerein I may shew my selfe a loving mother," she privileges maternal thought even as she acknowledges her most obvious transgression of cultural codes, that women be private and silent.² Furthermore, Leigh's epistolary apology anticipates further censure for her forays into theology and politics, as she discusses her mandates for the secular and religious lives of her sons. At the same time, Leigh states baldly that she writes out of her duty as a mother, and much of her appeal lies in her ability to disarm with apology even as she moves boldly to instruct her

sons and the public on how to be in the world and how to properly raise children.

Although she transgressed cultural codes, Leigh's (1616) book was the Renaissance equivalent of a best seller, and the popularity of the legacy books remains unresolvedly paradoxical in light of the cultural restrictions on early modern women, but further, each of these women makes clear another paradox: that the goals of her maternal practice, in varying manners and degrees, often lie at odds with public expectations for mothering.³ Cultural codes sanctioned the forum of these books, religious instruction to children, if not the public act of writing them. The role of Christian empowered women of all denominations by exhorting them to address God directly without male mediation. Helen Wilcox argues that devotional writing allowed women to give expression to their own identity; while a woman's speaking in public and writing "were severe transgressions of the feminine norm" (1997: 10). Elaine Beilin concurs as she points out that "a mother who wrote threatened the essence of her womanly virtue" (1987: 267), and her comment goes a long way towards explaining the energy the legacy writers spend asserting their chastity and their method of overlying discussions of motherly practice with the devotional voice.⁴ By their very presence, these mothers indicate that Renaissance ideologies of gender were challenged, a challenge made implicit in their articulation of maternal practice written from within patriarchal restrictions.⁵

However, as their subordination to God allowed early modern women empowerment in their role as Christian witness, so did their subordination to their husbands allow empowerment in their roles as wife and mother.⁶ Ruddick argues that "a mother typically takes as the criterion of her success the production of a young adult acceptable to her group," and early modern mothers were exhorted to the same standard (1983: 215). Early modern conduct book writer, Juan Luis Vives notes that a wife should not "be over-much eloquent," but she should be learned enough herself to teach her children morals and religion (1912: 207). Thus, Renaissance women's role as mother, with patriarchally sanctioned authority over her children, allowed an empowerment that began with her role as the child's educator, particularly in the area of religion. Although Richard Brathwait, another contemporary author, views women as less than mentally capable, he finds them fit to instruct their children: "Now, *Gentlewomen*, there be no Tutresses fitter to perfect this excellent worke in you, than those who were the secondary instruments of *being* unto you; Neither can those, who are derived from you, become better *instructed* than by you" (1970: 182). Margaret Sommerville (1995) and Valerie Wayne (1996) do not read the legacy books in terms of the discipline of the motherhood, but they do note cultural endorsement of a mother's power over her own children, and of the biblical laws that demanded obedience and respect to both parents. They conclude early modern women's authority over their children allowed them power in their own right. Therefore, while Clarissa Atkinson notes that motherhood "has always been shaped by religious systems, power relationships, and material structures" (1991: 246), Wayne makes clear that the legacy books

reclaimed the role of mother from the erosion it had undergone through the ideological construction of women by men since 1500. Wayne argues that in “disseminating the dominant ideology,” these writers “also modified received opinion in order to reflect their own interests and concerns” (1996: 72). Similarly, Betty Travitsky (1980) discusses early modern cultural endorsement of women’s religiosity and points out that women, in turn, applied these increased resources to their domestic and particularly to their maternal roles. Given an inch in which to act as religious instructors for their own children, these women, with intent or not, take the proverbial ell, and appropriate and integrate both religious and political power into their speaking voices as they articulate maternal practice.

Ruddick describes the interests governing maternal practice as interest in preserving the life of the child, in fostering the child’s growth, and in shaping a child acceptable to his or her society. I will examine the methods by which the legacy writers attend to these three interests as they position their books as mothers *in absentia* for their children, and thus use a public forum to make the articulations of their maternal practice a private counsel for their children. Ruddick further argues that mothers, like scientists with scientific practice, “are governed by the interests of their respective practices. But the style, skill, commitment, and integrity with which they engage in these practices differ widely from individual to individual” (1983: 216). I posit that the legacy books differ mainly in their articulations of maternal practice according to the ages of the children involved, and the socio-political climate, which had immediate and often severe implications depending upon the women’s religious affiliations. At the same time, the books seem cut from the same cloth as they work to see the aims of the mothers fulfilled. For example, Joscelin (1999) wrote her legacy while pregnant and faced with the possibility of death. Joscelin did die in childbed and one of the provisions she makes in her writing is to direct that her child be nursed by a godly woman and raised with her sisters, so that “her bringenge up may bee learninge the Bible as my sisters doo” (1999: 107). While Joscelin shows her faith to be profound throughout her book, I posit that she guessed, correctly, that her child had a better chance of seeing adulthood in a devoutly Christian household.

Thus, while these women did not privilege the physical life of their child over the child’s soul, they hold in common a deep and abiding interest in seeing these children live, grow and gain acceptance in the family’s faith, and thus ensure their immortal souls. From her assurance in her faith, Grymeston assumes the empowered voice of the mother and religious instructor throughout her book as she claims the necessity for her intervention in her son’s religious well-being. Her epistolary dedication to Bernye, who has his mother’s family name, makes clear her responsibility to write to him, in order to instruct him in religious and secular matters:

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 childe: there is no mother can eyther more affectionatly shew her nature, or more naturally manifest her affection, than in advising her children out of her own experience, to eschew evill, and encline them to doe that which is good. Out of these resolutions.... I resolved to breake the barren soile of my fruiteless braine, to dictate something for thy direction. (1610: A3)

While Grymeston emphasizes her illness and imminent death, and that she is "doubtfull of thy fathers life," the most compelling part of Grymeston's dedication comes in her Latin definition of her book as a "*portable veni mecum for thy Counseller, in which thou maiest see the true portrature of thy mothers minde, and find something eyther to resolve thee in thy doubts, or comfort thee in thy distress; hoping, that beeing my last speeches, they will be better kept in the conservance of thy memory.*" This Latin idiom, literally "came with me," defines the legacy as a ready reference text, which begs the conclusion that she means Bernye to keep the book by him and to consult it regularly, therefore to keep it, and thereby his mother, as his constant guide. Grymeston writes that she gathered the best material for her legacy, which is the essence of ready reference materials.⁷ While her rhetoric may engender sympathy for the dying woman who may soon be a widow, empathy for the love she shows her son, and admiration for her polish and learning, Grymeston underpins her persuasive tactics with an absolute insistence upon the importance of her role as mother and her desire to have the interests of her maternal practice filled. Having raised this son to young adulthood, Grymeston sets out the goals of her mothering as Bernye's absolute commitment to his faith, a goal that will be fulfilled in part through his reliance on her book.

Grymeston teaches her son to conform even as he practices their banned religion. A recusant Catholic, Grymeston suffered persecution throughout her life, and attributes her husband's imminent death to the "eight severall sinister assaults" he has suffered for their faith (1610: A4). Ruddick argues that mothers must not only preserve fragile life, but they must enable growth and change, and she suggests that these qualities of maternal practice might underlie the perception of women as valuing open over closed structures and the ambiguous, and refusing a sharp division between inner and outer self (1983: 218). I suggest that Grymeston deliberately shades her language to her son to fulfil the interests of her maternal practice and avoid having her book censored or her son persecuted. Through careful and covert rhetoric, Grymeston makes the presence of a Catholic mother felt, even as she removes the Catholic and motherly voice from her text. For example, she follows advice in her epistle with a discussion of the conscience and makes it a motherly voice in absentia. Grymeston then points out that her personal voice is confined to the limits of her epistle, that Bernye is the only one left of her nine children, that her love is therefore concentrated in him, and that her dearest wish is for him to live in God's blessing. She thus conflates motherly and holy into a personal voice that

she then removes from her person and figures as personae of various types in the following chapters. In essence, she takes a rhetorical step back in stating “*that the discourses following are motives to the same effect: which I pray thee use to peruse,*” but at the same time reasserts the authority of her role as mother, and ties that authority to her son’s conscience: “*As ever the love of a mother may challenge the performauce of her demaund of a dutyfull Childe; bee a bridle to thy selfe*” (1610: A6).

I posit that Grymeston distances herself from her text to remove both her gender, which may offend as she moves past religion to add worldly advice to a young man, and her religion, which would offend.⁸ She may say in French that she will suffer everything for her faith, but other than her continued use of the Vulgate, Rowlands, and Southwell, Grymeston does not overtly identify herself as a Catholic. Because of her recusancy, Grymeston’s most recurring and self-reflexive themes center on questions of facing unending adversity. For example, she opens her fifth chapter with a series of rhetorical questions that draw attention to life as a struggle, and while sin and redemption may be her subject, they become merely a trope as she belabours an adversity that seems far more external than internal. She personifies both forms of sin and human attributes that are susceptible to sin, and seems to set up the human being, in body and soul, as inviting and withstanding trouble just by being human. In the next chapter, Grymeston argues that God walks upon the hearts of men with feet of both mercy and truth, and she claims, in a rare use of the first-person voice, “I will sing unto thee, O Lorde, mercie and trueth together, not mercie alone.” More than anything she teaches her son to follow social mores except where they conflict with his conscience, and to seek strength from God’s mercy and justice in the face of social pressure.

Almost as often as the legacy writers address their child or children, they turn to inform the reader about effective mothering. Ruddick argues that an end goal of mothering is to shape a child acceptable to his or her social group: “the task of producing an appreciable child gives a mother a unique opportunity to explore, create, and insist on her own values; to train her children for strength and virtue” (1983: 220). However, Ruddick pays only cursory attention to the transformative values in maternal thinking, and I argue that for as often as the legacy writers conform to cultural codes, they subtly criticize social restrictions. As part of their maternal thought and in matters of conscience, they posit alternate ways of being in the world and in faith.

Writing for publication, Leigh notes her wish to inspire other women to come forward as she has, “shew their infirmities,” and write for their own children, a transgression she mediates by reminding them “to give men the first and chiefe place” (1616: 17). Leigh often adds this type of afterthought, in which she belatedly privileges men or allows their authority to reinforce her own. In addition, Leigh posits God’s authority and that of Princess Elizabeth, to whom Leigh addresses her opening dedicatory epistle, as endorsements of her own. In the dedication, she declares herself as able and obliged to guide

her children: "I could doe no lesse for them, then [...] to write them the right way, that I had truely observed out of the written word of GOD [...] and tolde them how many false paths they should finde, how they should finde them, and what care they should have to shunne them." Leigh takes upon herself both religious and political power as she ensures the preservation of the book that will ensure the fulfilment of her maternal enterprise. Leigh reinforces her second epistle, to her "beloved sonnes, George, John, and William Leigh, all things pertaining to life and godlinesse," by invoking her dead husband, but she places herself as the spiritual leader of the family and describes her chief desire, "to see you grow in godlinesse, that so you might meet your father in Heaven, where I am sure he is, my selfe being a witness of his faith in Christ." She concludes the epistle by turning again to worldly matters and their role in the spiritual. Ultimately, Leigh justifies her book with the rhetoric of maternal practice: "I have adventured to shew my imperfections to the view of the world, not regarding what censure for this shall bee laid upon me, so that herein I may shew my selfe a loving Mother." From this initial assurance and appropriation of a public ear, Leigh maintains a seemingly private voice as she sets forth her maternal practice and her theology. Ruddick defines maternal thinking as a conceptual scheme, a vocabulary and logic of connections, through which mothers "order and express the facts and values of their practice. [...] There is a unity of reflection, judgment, and emotion" (1983: 214). Leigh's rhetoric displays this unity in that she may transgress the boundaries of what was open for discussion by women, but the goals and emotional investments of maternal practice power her emancipatory move when she locates authority in the demands of her discipline.

Leigh (1616) frequently moves past articulating her maternal practice and past teaching her audience about parenting to usurp the role of the Puritan divine. Except when discussing her own "Motherly affection," Leigh consistently refers to the duties of the "Parent," a strategy by which she aligns herself with an authority equal to that of the male parent. Leigh's alignment of herself with male parental authority seems concomitant with her assumption of the role of preacher, an usurpation of power to which she refers repeatedly throughout the book. Leigh continues the tradition of religious instructional manuals and includes citations for the Biblical passages she draws on, thereby positioning her book as a valuable tool for other parents to use in raising their children to live "godlily." Brown points out that Leigh "maintains the connection between the more general social criticism she offers, and the ostensible origin of her writing in maternal cares and fears" (1999: 5). As part of her maternal practice, Leigh links every aspect of her children's future adult lives to the Bible, and makes their transition to adults who reference the Bible daily a natural progress. For example, in Chapter 42, Leigh moves toward the personal and into the mode of blessing that gives her book its title, and in this instance gives her children the possibility of forgiveness, including self-

forgiveness. She reminds them that “the deare children of God” may do acts which may be construed as sin, much as her breach of the codes of silence may be conflated with a breach of chastity, but which are not done in the spirit of sin and should remain without blame. Leigh draws on her own source of empowerment, as she sets the relationship between the person and God as the ultimate dictate for life and thereby gives her children personal resources that supercede cultural codes.

Joscelin’s (1999) maternal thought as a response to social practice lies in her long discussion of how a daughter must be in her world. As Ruddick points out all thought arises out of social practice, and mothers “respond to a reality that appears to them as given, as presenting certain demands. The response to *demands* is shaped by *interests* that are generally interests in preserving, reproducing, directing, and understanding individual and group life” (1983: 214).⁹ Joscelin’s legacy reflects her conclusions on how one shapes a daughter who can thrive in her culture while achieving an empowered subjectivity, and her polished erudition also describes a unity of reflection, judgment and emotion in her maternal practice. Travitsky comments on Joscelin’s “roll of phrase and command of language,” but she fails to see the full implications of Joscelin’s sinuous rhetoric, and concludes that Joscelin argues against educating a daughter (1980: 40).¹⁰ While the epistle reads as both disclaimer and apology, those features merely overlie rhetorical intent. Martin (1997) argues that Joscelin gains legitimacy by presenting herself as in danger of dying in or from childbirth; I add that Joscelin ensures justification by professing her love and respect for her husband, and concern for her maternal duties. She also makes clear her concern for the child and her understanding of maternal practice.

Moreover, while Joscelin may write within the boundaries of her gender, her argument turns finely on the premise of the ideal of female education. Just as she seems to oppose for a daughter the type of advanced learning she herself possesses, her rhetoric persuades that this effort would not be remiss. Note that Joscelin did not write for the public: she writes to persuade her husband, to convince him to preserve her book, to give it to the child, and to supervise the child’s education in her place. Joscelin does not need to belabour the necessity of her son’s secular education, and her hand concerning her daughter’s learning is light indeed. She first sets out the cultural confines, “I desire her bringing up may bee learninge the Bible, as my sisters doo. good huswifery, writing, and good work; other learninge a woman needs not” (1999: 107). However, Joscelin includes writing here, and immediately extends the limits of what a woman needs. She also places the onus upon her husband and upon God, “If thou desirest a learned daughter, I pray god give her a wise and religious hart that she may use it to his glory, thy comfort, and her own Salvatyon but howsoever thou disposest to her educatyon I pray thee labour by all means to teache her true humilitie” (1999: 107-08). She implies that between these two heads the proper young woman will be raised, one

who is a credit to her family and her God, whose very presence is a joy and whose humility alone exceeds her talents, in short, a woman like Joscelin herself. Joscelin's rhetorical strategies suggest that while she may overtly subscribe to cultural restrictions on the education of women, she covertly insists that a well-educated Christian woman should be desired and encouraged. Joscelin closes the epistle with, "Thine Inviolable, Eliza: Joscelin," which reinforces her marital chastity and defines her child as her husband's legacy, thereby ensuring his attention to her maternal practice.

Whether or not she considered publication possible and while her epistle regards her husband as the book's first audience, Joscelin writes directly to her child, a "you" of unknown gender. She makes clear that she wants this child and has considered how she would practice the vocation of motherhood: "Havinge longe often and earnestly desired of god, that I might bee a mother to one of his children, and the time now drawinge on w^{ch} I hope hee hathe appoynted to give thee unto me, it drew me into a consideratyon both whearfore I so earnestly desired thee and (having found that the true cause was to make thee happy) how I might compas this happines for thee" (1999: 109). Throughout, Joscelin employs language in a highly poetic manner, choosing for beauty and multivalent meanings: for her, "compasse" means both the bounds of moderation and skilful devising (*OED*). She may wish all happiness for this child, but it will be designed and moderated by maternal practice. She prefers for a son, "that thou mayst serve him as his minister, if he make thee a man," like Leigh she describes the ministry in terms that hold appeal for a boy or young man (1999: 110). Neither does she lose sight of a daughter's future, and expends a good deal of effort to persuade a female child of her worth and her mother's intention to instruct her: "if thou beest a daughter, thou mayst pe[r]haps thinke I have lost my labour but reade on, and thou shalt see my love and care of thee and thy salvation is as great, as if thou weart a sonne." Joscelin then figures the legacy as a treasure stored to ensure her child's salvation:

It may peradventure when thou comst to som descreyton appear strange to thee to receyve theas lines from a mother that dyed when thou weart born but when thou seest men purchas land an store up trespure for thyr unborn babes wonder not at me that I am carefull for thy Salvatyon beeinge such an eternal portyon. and not knowinge whether I shall live to instruct thee when thou art born let me 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 wthin me: sure a far greater care belongs to the soule to bothe theas cares I will endeavor my selfe so longe as I live [. . .] thearfore dear childe read hear my love and if god take Me from thee bee obedient to theas instructions as thou oughtest to be unto me. (1999: 110-11)

My ellipses indicate the omission of Joscelin's often quoted apology for

writing which in critical readings consistently overshadows the main point of this passage. While Joscelin embeds an apology for the social transgression of writing, she makes clear that a daughter deserves care and attention. By setting the beautifully phrased apology for her own actions amidst this message, Joscelin sets an exemplum: that while both worthy and capable, women must profess modesty according to cultural codes. She also expresses the values of her maternal practice, and like Grymeston, she intends her maternal interests to be fulfilled with a legacy book that will govern her child's behaviour.

Joscelin moves from her admonitions to a discussion on the importance of scriptural knowledge as a means for her daughter to shun pride and embrace humility. She exhorts the need for meditation, self-reflection and prayer, and then posits set prayers, public prayers, and her child's own "conceived Prayer" as worthy and necessary, thereby setting her child's creativity as necessary and to be encouraged in worship. Joscelin tends to address her child as "thou," occasionally as "Daughter." Either way, this child will study at length, for both God and soul. Joscelin often returns to her wish for the child's education, and she describes her own life as an exemplum of female education: "the morninge I have dedicated to meditayton, prayr, good studys, and honest recreatyon: The noon time is most used for discour" (1999: 119). Like the other legacy writers, Joscelin moves past her sanctioned role in religious instruction and advises her child on worldly matters, and, like the others, she links her cautions to the well-being of her child's soul; for example, she discusses the financial realm in terms of her child's place in the world and the charity he or she must practice for a place in the next. When Joscelin finally acknowledges social expectations of the silent female, she undermines her own admonition, "if thou beest a Daughter, remeber thou art a Maid, and such ought thy modesty to bee, that thou shouldst scarce speak," by noting that a women should "speake if need be." She then argues that even a daughter "has a calling which thou must not dishonour: thou art a Christian" (1999: 122). When Joscelin posits her daughter as the "thou" who will answer this calling, she undermines the imposition of silence with the Biblical insistence on prayer and worship. In short, she sets for her daughter a response to social practice that sees the child conform even as she assumes the freedom to express her intellect and conscience.

In a similar movement, Elizabeth Richardson opens *A Ladies Legacie to her Daughters* with a series of dedications that make clear her prayer book should be used on a daily basis by her children and should be seen as a conflation of religious and motherly practice. If her adult children use the book as they ought, they will follow her dictates from this life into the next. She places over her first dedication, rather than a flourish or abstract ornamentation, the engraving of an ornately carved chest, which suggests, along with repeated references to wills and legacies, that Richardson realized her book was the extent of material wealth she could leave to her daughters who "will carefully receive it, as comming from my love and affection towards you, and that you will please for my sake, the more to imploy it to your good; to which I will (while I live) daily adde my prayers and

bleſſing for your preſent and future happineſſe" (1645: 1). Richardson also insists on the book's importance to her motherly practice: "Therefore let me as a Mother intreat and prevaile with you to eſteem ſo well of it, as often to peruſe, ponder, practice, and make uſe of this Booke according to my intention" (2).¹¹ She then presupposes and deflates any public censure for printing, "I had no purpoſe at all when I writ theſe books, for the uſe of myſelfe, and my children, to make them publicke; but have been lately over perſwaded by ſome that much deſired to have them" (3). In the ſecond epiſtle to her daughters, Richardson uſes exempla as motherly practice when ſhe makes clear that ſhe has faced and ſurmounted many troubles in this world, that her ſtrengths are better ſpent in ſtriving for the next, and that what ſhe can impart to her daughters of her courage and fortitude will aid them in both: "now I have learned in what eſtate forever I am, therewith to be content, and to account theſe vile and transitorie things to be but vaine and loſſe, ſo I may win Chriſt the fountaine of all bliſſe, wiſhing you with me" (4-5). Later, Richardson ſupports this maternal practice by comparing herſelf to her own parents, who ſhe deſcribes as careful, industrious and devout in bringing up their children to know and ſerve God. She takes their exemplum as the beſt that parents can do and ſuggests the accompliſhment of her own maternal aims will add to her parents' eternal happineſſe.

As Richardson ensures the complete attention of her children, ſhe explains why ſhe has written moſtly prayer, "the winged meſſenger to carry our requeſts and want into the ears of the Lord,"¹² and refers to her difficult relationship with her ſons, "and howſoever this my endeavour may be contemptible to many, (becauſe a womans) which makes me not to joyne my ſons with you, leſt being men, they miſconſtrue my well-meaning; yet I preſume that you my daughters will not reſuſe your Mothers teaching" (1645: 5-6). While Richardson aſſumes the attention of a mature and educated female audience in her daughters, ſhe continues to worry her iſſues with her ſons through figurative language and Biblical exemplum. She moves to fulfill her maternal intereſts through rhetorical ſtrategies that work under two diſverſe and gendered agendas. She wiſhes for her daughters eternal life and tries to ensure they receive it through her guidance; ſhe alſo wiſhes her ſons to follow the example of the reverent Chriſtian and honour ſhe who ſuffered for them, and now ſits diſtanced from and ſeemingly diſavowed by them. If Richardson ſees her intervention as the means of ensuring grace for her daughters, then ſhe ſees her diſtance from her ſons as indicative of their diſtance from God, and her concerns about each are interwoven throughout the book. Richardson moves to accompliſh her motherly goals in a rhetoric that both acknowledges and tries to rectify that diſtance: ſhe ſets God's providence and ſacrifice for "us" againſt the duty "we" owe him, and continues to trope her diſſatisfaction with her ſons' behaviour along thoſe lines. She quotes from the Bible to remind her children of her place in their lives, and makes it the one other authority in her book, alſoſide her motherly authority. Where Grymeſton drew upon Dives, the generic ſinner, Richardson references Manaſſes, the quinteſſential ungrateful and rebellious ſon, in a prayer of ſubmiſſion and

repentance. Like Grymeston and Leigh, Richardson sets forth the conscience as a voice to which her children must listen, aligns it with her own speaking voice, and places in both the insistence that her daughters be continuously aware of themselves and their relationship with God. She insists for her daughters a personal and unmediated relationship with God, in effect sidestepping all patriarchal authority, religious or secular. Richardson privileges her own wealth of experience and wisdom as pedagogical practice. She teaches her daughters with the rhetoric of maternal practice bolstered by personal theology, and uses the same structures to remind her sons of their neglected duties towards their mother. In her book's structural analogy between prayer and epistle, Richardson privileges her relationship with God in order to empower her role as mother. The forces of motherly love and religious piety inform and stimulate each other as Richardson uses religious endorsement to criticize the behaviour of her adult sons and instruct her daughters.

Like M. R., Grymeston and Richardson, Anne Bradstreet (1867) writes to adult children and has accomplished her maternal social goals, and like all of the legacy writers, Bradstreet articulates her maternal practice in writing that reflectively expresses a disciplined conscience. In Ruddick's terms, Bradstreet identifies herself as a mother not by expressions of maternal emotion but by the strategies she adopts as she works to protect, nurture, and train her children, and she left *To My Dear Children* to instruct her children and grandchildren how to live in their world. As part of the first generation of Puritan colonists, Bradstreet faced innumerable hardships as she worked with her community to build a life in the New England Colonies. Her legacy describes these hardships and how she overcame them through her faith. At the same time, Bradstreet questions some of the tenets of her own church and describes her own views of the colony's politics and governance. Throughout her legacy, Bradstreet articulates an exacting maternal discipline that expresses her love for her children and grandchildren through the course of her legacy's memoratives, poetry and meditations, even as it aims to enable her children to live successfully and within their faith: "here you may find / what was your liveing mother's mind. / Make use of what I leave in Love" (1867: 3). Her opening letter and several following reminiscences dwell upon the hardships she faced through the course of life, and she in her hopes "that you may gain some spiritual advantage by my experiences," she makes use of exempla as motherly practice, much like the other legacy writers (4). Bradstreet lists the spiritual and physical troubles of her early life—disobedience, doubt, rebellion, smallpox, infertility—and explains that she overcame each of her trials with prayer and faith in God. She writes, "I have constantly observed this, that he hath never suffered me long to sitt loose from him, but by one affliction or other hath made me look home, and search what was amisse" (5-6). Bradstreet moves past her own exempla, however, to discuss how her children should develop their faith and belief. She articulates the basis for her own faith as her "Reason," which looks at the wonders of the world to enable the certainty of God, and she turns to the Bible

as the evidence of God's revealed word. She may pause to ruminate on Catholicism and Anne Hutchinson, but notes how quickly such considerations "turn me to my own Religion again" (9). Bradstreet follows her biographical writing with a series of poems, prayers and epistles that make clear the joy of living with faith. Bradstreet's maternal social practice encompasses more than her aim to see her children living Puritan Christian lives, however. She appends "Meditations Divine and Morall" to her legacy and sets in these series of maxims guidelines by which her children should make their educational, economic and political choices. In terms of resources, she writes "youth is the time of getting, middle age of improving, and old age of spending; a negligent youth is usually attended by an ignorant middle age, and both by an empty old age" (48). In terms of holding power, she argues that "authority without wisdom is like a heavy axe without an edge, fitter to bruise than polish" (50). Bradstreet sets forth her view on almost every aspect of life and she does not limit herself to the domestic or religious. However, her discussions of parenting reveal a good deal about her own maternal practice. Clearly, when she writes, "diverse children have their different natures; some are like flesh which nothing but salt will keep from putrefaction; some again like tender fruits that are best preserved with sugar: those parents are wise that can fit their nature according to their Nature," she shows that she understood and raised her children as individuals, and readied each for a rich adulthood (50).

Sara Ruddick (1983) marvels that given the many oppressions women face today, it seems miraculous that maternal thought rises at all, but she points out that it does and the evidence lies in literature and daily experience. While Anne Bradstreet writes the most literary representation of motherhood, all of these women left texts that articulate their maternal thought and practice. As Sylvia Brown points out, the legacy books do matter as representations of early modern women, and we should see their authors, "not as less, but different; not as failed novelists, but as resourceful shapers of the cultural materials available to them" (1999: viii). Brown defines the legacy writers as originators of influential textual models; I suggest that they engendered their greatest influences in their representations of themselves as mothers and the discipline of maternal practice.

¹Elizabeth Grymeston's *Miscelanea. Meditations. Memoratives*, published after her death in 1604, garnered enough popularity to warrant three augmented editions by 1610. Grymeston's *Miscelanea* was followed by Dorothy Leigh's *The Mothers Blessing*, written specifically for publication and the most popular of the genre with twenty-three editions between 1616 and 1674. Elizabeth Joscelyn wrote *The Mothers Legacie* just prior to her death in childbed in 1622, and it was published in 1624, with two more editions by 1684. M. R.'s *The Mothers Counsell* (1623), and Elizabeth Richardson's *The Ladies Legacie* (1645) complete this English quintet of mothers' legacy books. The one cross-Atlantic

legacy book, Susanna Bell's *The Legacy of a Dying Mother to Her Mourning Children* (1673), was written on her deathbed in London about her conversion experience in the Massachusetts colonies. The Colonial American legacy books are Anne Bradstreet's *To My Dear Children* (ca. 1672, published 1895), Sarah Goodhue's *The Copy of a Valedictory and Monitory Writing* (1681), and Grace Smith's *The Dying Mother's Legacy* (1712). I do not discuss Bell's book because she focuses on conversion rather than parenting, nor do I include *The Countess of Lincoln's Nurserie* (1622) by Elizabeth Clinton, because it is more manual than legacy, in that she writes only on breastfeeding. Due to space constraints I leave out M. R.'s anonymous legacy to her adult daughter, Smith's because it is a series of maxims very like Grymeston's *Memoratives* and Bradstreet's *Meditations*, and Goodhue's because of its similarities to Joscelyn's.

²I cite the legacy books by Leigh, Grymeston, M. R., Richardson, and Goodhue from copies on microfilm. I use Sylvia Brown's fine edition of Joscelyn's manuscript, rather than the early publication edited—and drastically altered—by Thomas Goad. I draw from the Ellis edition of Anne Bradstreet's legacy but am currently preparing a scholarly edition based on the Andover manuscript. I modernize only the alphabet used. There are no silent corrections; spelling and punctuation are left as is, and italicized font follows the original. I do not insert page numbers where there are none, but indicate chapter number or designation.

³Sylvia Brown attributes the popularity and authority of the legacy books to their authors' ability "to step outside the bound imposed by feminine silence and domesticity because they anchor themselves firmly within the limits of the household and the maternal role" (1999: viii). When these writers rely upon apology and justification—and the expectation of imminent death—to write from their patriarchally endorsed roles as Christian, wife, and mother, they note their unstable speaking positions as signs of culturally circumscribed subject positions. At the same time, they carefully re-form that problematic position, and the legacy writings function as crafted self-portraits through which women rhetorically reclaim their subjectivity. They move past making visible women's disenfranchisement to set forth a complex form which enables a provisional self-authorization from within cultural restrictions.

⁴Another way to make clearer the need for early modern Englishwomen to insist on their Christianity and virtue as above and as enabling their role as mother is to look at Larry Wolff's reading of the letters of their French contemporary, Mme de Sévigné. Writing to her daughter during a Lenten retreat, Mme de Sévigné was censured by her priest for holding her daughter as an idol, and told her maternal love bordered on worship. But when she explicitly states "I wish my heart were for God as it is for you," she invokes the conventions of piety to censure excessive maternal devotion, but even in seeming to censure herself, she negotiates religion into a vehicle of expression, rather than repression, of her maternal practice (1993: 360-61).

⁵Meredith Skura (1997) points out in her examination of Elizabeth Cary's play

how great a role religion could play in women's empowerment in the Renaissance. Skura also notes the importance of maternal influence in shaping Cary's own life and spiritual experience.

⁶Both Margaret Hannay (1994) and Margaret Sommerville (1995) provide very fine historical contexts for and readings of Renaissance marriage, cited below.

⁷While Grymeston (1610) may place weight on her borrowings in the epistle, in reality they work to support her arguments and magnify the beauty of her own rhetoric, rather than to add other ideas. Her selections, especially those from her executed Catholic cousin Robert Southwell, follow her own careful conclusions and echo her own meditations and sentiments. For example in Chapter III, she supports her assertion, "He that knowes his life is but a way to death," with this couplet from Southwell, "*For what's the life of man, but even a tragedy, / Full of sad sighes, and sore catastrophes?*"

⁸Grymeston, in fact, makes a good example for Ruddick's discussion of social perceptions of the success of mothering. Ruddick argues that society considers teaching children to conform to dominant social values an achievement, even though those values may go against the mother's own, and she points out that when mothers insist on their own values, they are perceived as failing (1983: 222). Under these terms, Grymeston's maternal practice can be seen as personal success, but a cultural failure.

⁹Ruddick suggests that when the mother is wholly powerless and allows her society to determine her maternal practice, there results an inauthentic mothering in which she accepts the uses to which others put her children and remains blind to the implications of those uses. She concludes that "a mother who trains either for powerlessness or abusive power over others betrays the life she has preserved, whose growth she has fostered. She denies her children even the possibility of being strong and good" (1983: 221). I argue that the legacy writers do not accept their own powerlessness, that they claim power in the very act of writing, and that they were motivated largely for the purpose of making their children "strong and good."

¹⁰In other works, Jacqueline Pearson and Randall Martin also reach this conclusion.

¹¹Richardson (1645) makes similar movements in her handwritten emendations in the Houghton Library copy of the book. It is inscribed with an autograph dedication to her grandson, Edward Dering, son of her daughter Anne, a boy she is happy to claim as "one of mine, & this coming from me, I nothing doubt of your loving acceptance of it." She asks her grandson's pardon for the book's weakness, but insists that he "you will gently censure & beare it all." She follows this insistence with the highest of her titles, Elizabeth Cramond, and sets herself over him as grandmother over grandson, and Baroness over Knight Baronet.

¹²As Sylvia Brown points out, Richardson placed her prayers into public circulation just as *The Book of Common Prayer* was withdrawn (1999: viii).

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