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Vassar College

Text as Creation

The Centrality of Motherhood Across
Women's Writing in the Early Modern Period

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ENGL300: Senior Tutorial

Professor Leslie Dunn

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1. Introduction

“True, it may tax my Indiscretion, being so fond of my Book, as to make it as if it were my Child, and striving to shew to the World, in hopes Some may like her, although no Beauty to Admire, yet may praise her Behavior, as not being wanton, nor rude... and rather tax the Parents Indiscretion, then the Childs Innocency.”

Margaret Cavendish, *Poems and Fancies* (1653)

While Cavendish herself never had any children, her comparison of her text to a child she has mothered is reflective of a common theme for women who were writing as mothers in early modern England. In an attempt to combat the subversion of her act of writing as a woman in this period, Cavendish equates it with something much less subversive, becoming a mother. In comparing the author of a work to an expected position for a woman, and the text to a child, something a woman is expected to produce and care for, women authors left less room for criticism of their positions as authors and their creations of texts. Cavendish, specifically, by comparing her text to a daughter, anticipates the criticism women can expect to receive, both as women in general and as writers. Due to the conflict between the femininity of being a woman and the masculinity of being a text, Cavendish’s book is “no Beauty to Admire;” however, her book still falls in line with how an acceptable woman should act by “not being wanton, or rude.” Cavendish redirects the criticism her book will receive coming from a woman author to the book itself, noting that it is unfair to criticize a book based on its authorship and not its contents. These parallels in how Cavendish and her critics see her text and how she and the world would see her theoretical child exist across early modern genres, including books about midwifery, poetry, and mothers’ advice books.

According to N.H. Keeble’s chapter on “Authorship” in *the Cultural Identity of Seventeenth Century Woman: A Reader*, while women writers addressed several obstacles they faced

specific to their gender regarding their writing, these addresses make writing for the early modern woman seem less accessible than it actually was. Nonetheless, women were often doubted in their authenticity as writers, and came to expect accusations of plagiarism (Keeble 264). These doubts regarding their writing often fed into the confidences of these women, which gave rise to both long apologias in their texts as well as inconsistencies in how these women portrayed themselves (Keeble 264). While they were writing texts which they had authority over as mothers or midwives, they also had to write modestly and minimize their writing by saying it was not comparable to writing coming from men (Keeble 264). This motherly authority was conflicted in that motherhood meant that women should be taking care of their children and performing their wife-like duties instead of writing; while having children created authorities for these women, it simultaneously diminished them (Keeble 264). Furthermore, the act of writing went directly against the expectation for women to avoid public speech, although patriarchal religious leaders would eventually encourage women to give their children advice, easing this rigid view of women speaking to the public (Travitsky ix). Despite these obstacles, women, and mothers specifically, managed to write a variety of texts in the seventeenth century, although these texts were also limited in their writing and their authors' backgrounds as wealthy women from educated families (Keeble 264).

Critically, motherhood as a theme and a creator of authority for women writers in early modern England has been addressed before. As already mentioned, N.H. Keeble's *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth Century Woman* contains chapters addressing "Authorship," as well as "Mother and Daughter," and "Midwifery and Wet-Nursing," in which she addresses mothers' advice books authors Dorothy Leigh and Elizabeth Joscelyn as well as early modern books regard-

ing breast-feeding and childbirth. Joscelin's text is addressed again in Jean LeDrew Metcalfe's introduction to her edition of *The Mothers Legacy to her Vnborn Child*, with Metcalfe discussing Joscelin's legitimizing of her writing through her love toward her child. Jeanine Hensley also briefly mentions the metaphor of authorship and motherhood in her introduction to *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, noting that to Bradstreet, her book "was her own child" (Hensley xxxi). Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh's *Maternal Measures: Figuring Caregiving in the Early Modern Period* chapters titled "Maternal Textualities" and "Marian Devotion and Maternal Authority in Seventeenth-Century England" address the importance of women's writing in domestic spaces and how Mariolatry allowed early modern women to gain authority as mothers. Particularly, Miller and Yavneh emphasize the importance of women's writing across genre, from initials in needlework to letters written by young girls. Through these critical connections between motherhood and authorship and the existence of this theme across early modern women's writing, a close reading comparing these different writings, despite their different genres, is warranted, though the difference in subject matter in these different works can make a critical reading seem difficult or unnecessary.

Motherhood warranted certain types of writing while others remained out of the realm of possibility for women authors in the early modern period, as we can see from the listed critical works surrounding motherhood and authorship. Seventeenth century Christian humanists and protestant reformers allowed the rise of the mother's advice book by encouraging women to train their children in religion, which specifically allowed mothers to write books despite the expectation of women not to write for a public audience (Travitsky ix). Mothers' advice books were still different from fathers' advice books, however, in their overt religiosity and apologia (Travitsky

x). Books about childbirth and breastfeeding were likewise warranted, as midwifery was a medical profession relegated only to women in the early modern period (Keeble 209). As an expert on the physical act of becoming a mother, Jane Sharp was able to write *The Midwives Book* without treading parts of medicine that were reserved for men, which women were still not allowed to practice. Sharp even goes so far as to tell her readers to leave surgeons and physicians to perform their tasks and midwives to perform theirs, rather than encouraging her women readers to become proficient in the skills of a surgeon or physician. Motherhood allowed women authors to write genres of their own, while still making it difficult for them to assimilate into genres already occupied by men. The evolution of Anne Bradstreet's poetry illustrates this, with her earlier poetry addressing more traditional poetic themes and her later poetry addressing domestic and feminine subject matter.

With motherhood as a means of justification in these new distinctly feminine realms of writing, the women authors of these texts used their positions as mothers, or in Jane Sharp's case, as a midwife, in order to build their authorities to write. For Sharp, her expertise in her field gave her the authority to write *The Midwives Book*. Sharp writes a text that only a midwife can write, not a man who is a surgeon or physician. Similarly, Anne Bradstreet's poetry, in its discussion of domestic themes and motherhood, is poetry that can only come from a mother, giving Bradstreet the authority to write about new poetic subject matters, including her everyday life as a woman, wife, and mother. For the authors of mothers' advice books, and especially Elizabeth Joscelyn, mothering children allowed them to also mother texts. Joscelyn's anticipation of dying in childbirth, during the act of becoming a mother, allows her to write her legacy, as she will not be able to tell it to her child when it is older. Without motherhood, Joscelyn and Elizabeth

Grymeston would have no reason to write their mothers' advice books; without the relationship of a mother to a child, these women cannot have the relationship of an author to a text.

From this existence across genre of motherhood as a creator of authority in feminine authorship, two seemingly completely different texts can create dialogues with each other. In the case of this essay, Jane Sharp's 1671 *The Midwives Book* and Anne Bradstreet's collection of poetry, but specifically her poems, "The Author to Her Book," "The Prologue," and "Here Follows Some Verses Upon the Burning of Our House July 10th, 1666. Copied Out of a Loose Leaf Paper," are both creations borne out of motherhood, and exist as specifically feminine forms of previously existing masculine genres. *The Midwives Book*, as stated above, addresses the feminine medical field of midwifery, rather than the more masculine fields of surgery or general medical practice. Likewise, Bradstreet's later poems, especially the ones mentioned above, take on more feminine qualities than her earlier poems, which address history and masculine literary figures. While early modern women had a limited subject matter which they could address, both Sharp and Bradstreet address subject matter that only women, and, respectively, only midwives and mothers can, keeping their subjects as ones of which men cannot take ownership. This common usage of motherhood as an authority to create feminine texts is paired with Bradstreet's and Sharp's similar discourse on the relationships between disabled children and their mothers, with Bradstreet comparing this relationship to that of an imperfect text by an early modern woman writer. This connection between motherhood, children with disabilities, and authorship, adds yet another layer of analysis between Sharp and Bradstreet.

The second chapter of this essay makes a more obvious comparison between two books from the mothers' advice books genre, Elizabeth Grymeston's 1604 *Miscelanea, Meditations*,

Memoratives and Elizabeth Joscelyn's 1624 *The Mothers Legacy to Her Vnborn Child*. Both of these women anticipated dying before seeing their children grow up, and wrote legacies to them in order to parent them beyond their deaths. Joscelyn was pregnant with her first child at the time she wrote her legacy, while Grymeston only had one surviving child out of nine. By nature of their genre, these books are united in their origins of motherhood, and they both draw comparisons between their authorship and their positions as mothers. Grymeston's and Joscelyn's approaches to the mothers' advice book genre, however, are vastly different. Much of Grymeston's *Miscelanea* is not attributed to Grymeston herself, but is rather pieces and parts of other literary works pulled together into one piece, with Grymeston's own translations of non-English literature and hybrids of her work and other authors'. Grymeston is also addressing her text to her only surviving son, Bernye, and it is tailored specifically to a child that will grow up to be a man. Joscelyn's work, on the other hand, is largely religious; since she is addressing it to an unborn child, she switches between addressing a son or a daughter. This variety within the mothers' advice books genre is important, with women taking different liberties with the authorities they were given as mothers in the early modern period, and their different uses of the genre and their styles of writing within it. Grymeston and Joscelyn also make different choices in how they build their authorities in addition to their roles as mothers, and what these women chose to withhold or disclose about their lives also provides variety within the genre, lending these books as good comparisons.

Coming from the early modern period, these texts also have great variety in their spelling conventions, even across different editions. Regarding Joscelyn's name, which has also appeared as "Jocelin" and "Joceline," I have followed suit with Metcalfe's spelling, which is based on

Joscelin's surviving signature; however, I will be deviating from Metcalfe's modernization of Joscelin's texts by replacing the letter "u" with the modern "v," where appropriate. With Grymeston, while I am drawing my quotes and paraphrases from a 1979 published facsimile by Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, Ltd., I have modernized the spelling in the text, in order to improve clarity and lessen distractions. As for Sharp, I am also using a published facsimile published in 1985 by Garland; however, as her spelling conventions are more readily understood by a modern reader, I have not changed the spelling in my quotes, with the exception of the use of the long "s," which I have replaced with the short version. Finally, for Anne Bradstreet, I have quoted all of her poems as they appear in the Jeanine Hensley edition of *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, without any modifications of my own.

2. Jane Sharp's *The Midwives Book* (1671) and Anne Bradstreet's Collection of Poetry

While an instructional book on midwifery and a collection of poetry may seem to be at odds with each other thematically, *The Midwives Book* and Anne Bradstreet's poetry similarly discuss disability and history, and also use their authors' past experiences to justify their writing by women. While not much is known about Jane Sharp's life, *Midwives* gives a window into her experiences before its writing. The title page refers to Sharp as a "Practitioner in the Art of Midwifery above thirty years," establishing Sharp's experience as a midwife and in turn her authority to write a book about it (Sharp Title Page). Published in 1671 in London, the book is a straightforward and practical guide to the art of midwifery, with chapters on topics such as men's and women's anatomies, causes of infertility, signs of pregnancy, labor, and disease, how to guide women during labor and after birth, and how to choose an appropriate nurse (Sharp Title Page). As Sharp states in her book, midwifery was relegated only to women during the early modern period, with the practices of physicians and surgeons being left to men. Sharp does not contest this separation, allowing her subject to remain a feminine one, and not one concerned with assimilating into men's regions of medicine.

While Sharp does not encourage her women readers to educate themselves beyond midwifery, she also criticizes this education along with other subjects that are usually afforded only to men. In her introduction, Sharp says,

It is not hard words that perform the work, as if none understood the Art that cannot understand Greek. Words are but the Shell, that we oftentimes break our teeth with them to come at the kernel, I mean our brains to know what is the

meaning of them; but to have the same in our mother tongue would save us a great deal of needless labour. (Sharp 3-4).

For Sharp, the extra efforts men make in order to understand Greek texts is not necessary. Sharp puts more emphasis on women's minds and their ability to understand the meaning behind words, rather than understanding words in an ancient language. While Bradstreet uses her knowledge of Greek in her early poetry to compare herself to men and show herself to be as educated as they are, Sharp's approach is decidedly more separatist, choosing to value women for possessing knowledge of midwifery, a women's field, rather than the men's fields of surgery and general medicine. Sharp goes on to say, "but the Art of *Midwifry* chiefly concerns us, which, even the best learned men will grant, yielding something of their own to us, when they are forced to borrow from us the very name they practice by, and to call themselves *Men-midwives*" (Sharp 4). Sharp takes possession of her field as an expert on midwifery, and this reinforces her authority to write. Sharp does not have to hold the education or professional position of a man in order to write. Her experience in midwifery and knowledge of it is enough, and as a woman and an expert, she is the one who should be writing about midwifery, not men. Sharp is also helping other women gain this knowledge to which they are entitled by nature of their sex. She is not only speaking on something which she has the authority to do, but she is also helping afford this knowledge to other people who are deserving of it.

Throughout *Midwives*, Sharp justifies her writing through several avenues, including the comparison of writing to motherhood and her experience in the field. While little is known about her life outside *Midwives*, from the text, we know that Sharp had knowledge on Ancient Greece and Rome, as well as human anatomy, as Sharp directly engages this knowledge with her experi-

ence in the field. Furthermore, her claim to thirty years as a midwife stands true with her long discussions of different situations that may arise in conception, miscarriage, labor, childbirth, and afterbirth. Through this engagement, Sharp shows this knowledge that is usually only afforded to men to also be useful to her in the woman's field of midwifery. While some discrepancy exists regarding Sharp's audience being just women or both women and men, based on her opening remarks, as *Midwives* continues, while Sharp may anticipate both women and men reading her text, it will benefit women much more. These benefits come from both Sharp's long history in the field, allowing her to speak to a variety of situations her audience may encounter, and her education in history and anatomy, which allow her to give the history behind terms and other aspects of midwifery and also to speak of different body parts with clarity and accuracy. By allowing the benefits of healthy mothers and children, Sharp's writing does not need the approval of men authors that it would need if it addressed a more masculine medical field.

In comparison to most other women in the early modern period, but especially Jane Sharp, there is a lot of information available on Anne Bradstreet's life. Born in England around 1612 or 1613, Bradstreet's upbringing allowed her to become educated and work on her writing, especially through the encouragement of her father (Hensley xxiv). She and her husband, Simon Bradstreet, married in 1628, and her family moved to New England in 1630, but it wasn't for another 20 years that her first collection of poetry, *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America* was published without her permission in London (Hensley xxiii). While it was rare for a woman poet to be published in the early modern period, it was even rarer for a poet from New England to be published, with Bradstreet being one of the first (Hensley xxix). The poems in the original edition of *The Tenth Muse* include, "A dialogue between Old England and New" and a series of

quaternions addressing traditional subject matter for the early modern period, such as, “The Four Elements” and “The Four Monarchies,” which itself is divided into four sections, addressing the Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman monarchies. Like Sharp, Bradstreet uses her knowledge on this subject to justify her position as a woman author by showing her knowledge of historical subjects; however, just as Sharp uses her experience in the field of midwifery to talk about a subject outside the realm of a traditional early modern education, which was usually reserved for men, Bradstreet’s poems written later in her life eventually move past these subjects. She eventually uses both her history writing poetry and her positions as a wife and mother to engage with her experiences in a more feminine way, as well as to write poetry that does not engage with them at all, but instead reflects on aspects of her everyday life.

In the subsequent versions of *The Tenth Muse*, whose publishing Bradstreet had knowledge of, and Bradstreet’s manuscripts, poems such as “The Prologue,” “The Author to Her Book,” and ““Here Follows Some Verses Upon the Burning of Our House July 10th, 1666. Copied Out of a Loose Leaf Paper” are included, and are clearly written with an awareness of Bradstreet’s critics. The themes of, “The Prologue” and “The Author to Her Book,” do not seek to imitate those of the men poets who came before her; rather, these poems are snide addresses to her critics, commenting on their attempts to discredit her as a poet, saying that a woman could not write at her caliber, and that she should be busying herself with more feminine tasks. Moving on from this response to her critics, Bradstreet’s poetry evolves toward a more feminine subject in a way that concerns her critics even less, writing about her everyday life as a woman, wife, and mother. Particularly, in, “Upon the Burning of Our House,” Bradstreet reacts to her house catching on fire and reflects on the time she spent there, going back through spaces and what she

did in them, completely doing away with the traditional literary and historical topics of the earlier, “The Four Elements” and “The Four Monarchies.” Bradstreet’s position as a mother allows her to move on from traditional subjects into a poetry that is her own and that embraces her motherhood, rather than denying it.

In “Here Follows Some Verses Upon the Burning of Our House July 10th, 1666. Copied Out of a Loose Leaf Paper,” which was written sixteen years after the first publishing of *The Tenth Muse*, Bradstreet relays her feelings while watching her house burn down and looking at the ruins afterward. “Here stood that trunk, and there that chest,/ There lay that store I counted best,” Bradstreet says, going through the ruins (29-30). Here, Bradstreet recalls how her domestic space, her home, was arranged, and takes claim over a traditionally feminine space. Bradstreet also makes a reference to a store of food, perhaps grain, which she herself had counted before her house burned down. This activity, also a feminine one involving food to be cooked, gives Bradstreet’s poem a distinctly feminine setting. Bradstreet does not recall her memories of the hundreds of books which were destroyed the night her house burned down, nor does she recall writing. Bradstreet instead dwells on domestic tasks in the domestic setting of her house. Bradstreet speaks more of her everyday life in “In My Solitary Hours in My Dear Husband His Absence,” in which she reflects on her time when her husband is away and also relates it to times when her son is away. In the third stanza of the poem, Bradstreet says, addressing God, “And Thy abode Thou’st made with me;/ With Thee my soul can talk;/ In secret places Thee I find/ Where I do kneel or walk” (11-14). Bradstreet once again discusses aspects of her everyday life; in this particular line, Bradstreet also refers to her home, as it would be a place where she would kneel or walk. These simple actions may seem to pale in comparison in terms of poetic subject

matter when compared to poems such as “Of the Four Ages” or “A Dialogue between Old England and New,” but through these older, more traditional poems, Bradstreet has created evidence of her past and her experiences as a writer, allowing her simple subject matter to stand on its own without the education and experience of a man to support it.

Like Sharp does in her *Midwives Book*, Bradstreet puts her educational background and experiences in dialogue with each other in her poetry, though her different subject matter brings about a different presentation of these dialogues. Despite their difference in topics, however, Bradstreet and Sharp address similar themes, and their meditations on text as creation and the mothering of children lead to another dialogue, one between Sharp and Bradstreet, who faced similar criticisms in this period due their gender. The criticism both of these women expected toward their work is addressed in their introductions, including Bradstreet’s “The Author to Her Book.” Bradstreet’s comparison of her book to a disabled child she has mothered complements Sharp’s discussion of the birthing of children with congenital deformities. In both of these women’s mentions of history, particularly Greek and Roman history, and their engagements of that history with their respective midwifery and poetry, their vastly different fields once again come into contact with each other.

Bradstreet’s poem, “The Author to Her Book” views text as creation, as she directly calls her book “ill-formed offspring,” comparing it to a child she has mothered (1). Here, she emphasizes her authority as an author by comparing her authorship to motherhood, which was her expected and accepted role in society at the time of her writing. By doing this, Bradstreet is able to write; however, she still engages with apologia, describing her writing as “unfit for light” and “hobbling” (9;16). By comparing her text to a child with a physical disability, Bradstreet takes a

weaker role as creator and mother, viewing her texts as imperfect creations, not worthy of public view, much like Cavendish does in *Poems and Fancies*. She has the authority to create them, but they are ill-formed and should not be read by a public audience. Bradstreet also speaks of this audience, who “Made thee in rags, halting to th’ press to trudge,/ Where errors were not lessoned (all may judge)” (5-6). Her audience’s criticism of her text reflects the criticism and fear often surrounding mothers who had children with disabilities, as we see in Jane Sharp’s *The Midwives Book*. Much like it was often the mother’s actions which lead to a child being disabled and the criticism of that disability, here, Bradstreet’s poetry is heavily criticized, and part of that criticism comes from her places as a woman, wife, and mother.

In *Midwives*, Sharp dedicates an entire chapter to “Of false conception, and of the Mole or Moon Calf,” in which she describes the many causes of a moon calf, or a baby with congenital deformities. According to Sharp, “without dispute, the principal cause is women’s carnally knowing their Husbands when their terms are purging forth, from whence Moles, and Monsters, distorted, imperfect, ill qualified Children are begotten. Let such as fear God, or love themselves, or their posterity beware of it” (Sharp 109). It is the mothers of these children who are at fault for their deformities, because they had sex with their husbands during menstruation. Sharp describes menstrual blood as “impure” and “unclean,” which is what leads to the conception of a moon calf (Sharp 107-8). While Sharp also lays some blame on men when their sperm is “corrupt,” her wording, “women’s carnally knowing their husbands,” clearly indicates that the fault is on women in the event of a moon calf. Sharp also states that moon calves can arise from women being distracted during sex, claiming, “Imagination oftentimes also produceth Monstrous births, when women look to much on strange objects” (Sharp 111). According to Sharp, these births

“proceed from a fault in the forming faculty,” and as we see in Bradstreet’s apologia in “The Author to Her Book,” this blaming of women in the act of creation translates from the conception of children to the writing of a poem (Sharp 107). By deviating from pure or clean actions and thoughts, Bradstreet’s creation becomes corrupt, leaving the blame on her.

Jane Sharp and Anne Bradstreet, as learned and experienced women, are able to establish their authority as writers through routes other than motherhood, and can instead display their extensive educations, Bradstreet on history and literature and Sharp on midwifery. In Bradstreet’s “The Prologue,” she discusses the criticism she receives as a female author and compares herself to other great poets of the past. Bradstreet establishes her authority to write, and in explaining all of the writers and the topics she is not writing about, Bradstreet shows her knowledge on these topics, giving herself authority as a writer. Sharp, too, rather than directly claiming her authority as the author of *The Midwives Book*, instead creates her authority through writing the text itself. At 95,000 words, *The Midwives Book* is an extensive guide, and is meant to be helpful toward women and midwives. By authoring such a long and thorough text, Sharp has no choice but to show a certain amount of authority and knowledge over the content about which she is writing. For both of these women, their texts, their creations, are evidence of their knowledge, and as a result, their texts give them the authority to continue to write more texts.

Bradstreet opens “The Prologue” stating that “To sing of Wars, of Captains, and of Kings, /... For my mean Pen are too superior things,” suggesting instead that we “Let Poets and Historians set these forth” (1-6). These historical events and figures are too advanced for Bradstreet, a woman, to write about, and such complicated topics should be left to poets and historians, two traditionally male occupations during Bradstreet’s time. Throughout the rest of the poem, how-

ever, Bradstreet mentions several historical figures and events which demonstrate that these topics are not so complicated or unknown to her. In the second stanza, Bradstreet compares herself to poet Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas, saying “Fool, I do grudge the Muses did not part/
 ‘Twixt him and me that over-fluent store./ A Bartas can do what a Bartas will/ But simple I according to my skill” (9-12). Here, Bradstreet references muses, a common subject for Bartas’s poetry, particularly in his 1584 divine poem *L’Uranie* about Urania as a Christian muse. In Bradstreet’s referencing of muses, she aligns herself with the ranks of great poets like Bartas, as she is addressing the same subject matter he is, not just “womanly” or “feminine” subjects, such as motherhood and children. “The Prologue” continues, contrasting Bradstreet to Demosthenes of Athens, an ancient Greek orator, and mentioning other ancient Greek figures, particularly Calliope, another muse, though, more importantly, the muse who presided over eloquence and epic poetry (Hornblower). These historical and mythological references, while on the surface appear to be showing all of the topics Bradstreet cannot write about and the writer she is not, only prove the knowledge Bradstreet holds as a writer, upholding her authority to write about whatever she pleases, including ancient Greece and Greek mythology.

Bradstreet’s reference to ancient Greek muse Calliope attempts to combat the obstacles early modern women authors faced regarding the attributions of their works. Bradstreet addresses this criticism in lines 29-30, saying, “If what I do prove well, it won’t advance,/ They’ll say it’s stol’n, or else it was by chance.” This criticism regarding attribution coexisted with criticism that mothers were neglecting their duties to their children by choosing to write poetry instead of taking care of them. Calliope’s authorship, however, is similar to the conception of a child in that she works with men who are poets to help her create their texts, and as a Greek muse and author,

she supports Bradstreet's writing by carrying out writing as a task similar to having children.

"The Prologue" compares Calliope's child to poetry in lines 31- 34, stating, "But sure the antique Greeks were far more mild,/ Else of our Sex, why feigned they those nine/ And poesy made Calliope's own child?/ So 'mongst the rest they placed the Arts divine," By comparing the task of writing to the task of motherhood, Bradstreet's writing is no longer a distraction from her duties as a mother, but a reflection of them. Motherhood does not have to take away the authority to write, as critics in the seventeenth century attempted to claim, but it instead helps build this authority despite the obstacles women authors like Bradstreet faced.

Sharp similarly discusses the Greek physician, Galen of Pergamon, and also demonstrates her direct experience in the field of midwifery, showing her to be knowledgeable, helping to establish her authority as a woman author and as an expert on childbirth. In Chapter I of Book IV, "Rules for Women that are come to their Labour," Sharp names several possible scenarios which can occur during labor, all of which indicate a direct experience with each particular scenario and a long enough career to have encountered all of the situations she addresses. Among these scenarios, Sharp lists twelve signs that "the Child is dead in the womb," lists different postures women may choose during birth, reviews the possible positions the child may sit in the womb, with a graphic included, and discusses how to handle the birthing of twins (Sharp 187-204). In total, Sharp lists over 40 possible scenarios that a midwife may encounter, showing her experience with many more births than that as a result. In discussing the possibility of a cesarean birth, Sharp says, "The *Cesarian* Birth is the drawing forth of the child either dead or alive, by cutting open the Mothers womb, it was so called because *Julius Cesar* the first *Roman* Emperor was so brought into the world" (Sharp 195). Here, Sharp brings her experience with medicine together

with her education of ancient Rome, showing not only her knowledge of both of these topics, but also her ability to create her own dialogue between these two subjects within the theme of motherhood and childbirth. Bradstreet does this, too, creating poetry out of her education of ancient Greece and Bartas, which in turn defends her position as a woman who is a mother and a writer, while also showing her artistic ability and talent.

For both Bradstreet and Sharp, motherhood was central to creating their authorities to write, which we see in both their subject matter and their analogies regarding authorship and motherhood; however, it was also supported by their educations and experiences in their respective fields. The various criticisms they faced regarding their authorship necessitated a variety of defenses, including apologizing for their writings, conflicts in self-representation, and displaying their knowledge in their fields by engaging it with their experiences, and motherhood played a role in all of these defenses. While both of these women appealed to their critics through apology, these apologies are in conflict with the support their writings received from motherhood, with Sharp's writing being necessary for women to give birth safely and Bradstreet's comparison of her writing to a child, making it less subversive in its similarities to motherhood. Sharp simultaneously portrays herself as a poor writer and an expert on childbirth with 30 years of experience, and while she claims to be as brief as possible, her text still runs to an extraordinary length. Bradstreet, too, claims her authorship and text to be imperfect, but continues to write poetry throughout her life which focuses more on her as a person and that is more self-aware. These authors' shared theme of motherhood is also supported by the education both of them possess and their engagement of that education, particularly history, with their experiences in midwifery and writing, respectively. As Sharp's writing concerns becoming a mother, and Bradstreet's being a

mother, motherhood remains central in their writings, even when the focus turns to their knowledges of Ancient Greece, Ancient Rome, and literature.

Motherhood is also central to Sharp and Bradstreet's texts with regard to genre, aiding in the creation of new, feminine versions of the already-existing masculine genres of medical texts and poetry, which is also relevant in the third chapter's discussion of mothers' advice books. In doing this, Sharp and Bradstreet's texts handle their expected criticisms by becoming less subversive of their authors' femininities. *The Midwives Book* can stand as a necessary medical text that helps women become mothers, rather than as a text written by a woman trying to inappropriately insert herself into the medical world, and Bradstreet's poetry, through its discussion of her everyday domestic life, can stand as poetry that promotes her femininity and domesticity instead of subverting them. While Bradstreet and Sharp's distinctly feminine writings may seem limited by nature of their centrality and support in motherhood, and other types of genres are still lacking in their feminine versions, the authority and separation motherhood lent these writers is invaluable in the early modern period. Like the conception of a child, with the support of motherhood, writing could now exist in the feminine and the masculine, and the texts that resulted from these dualities, including those by Elizabeth Grymeston and Elizabeth Joscelyn, while still subject to criticism of plagiarism or inadequacy, could defend themselves to attempt to stand as legitimate forms of writing.

3. Elizabeth Grymeston's *Miscelanea, Meditations, Memoratives* (1604) and Elizabeth Joscelin's *The Mothers Blessing to her Vnborn Child* (1624)

The mother's advice book genre gave women, especially mothers, the authority to write; however, the women who benefited the most from this newly-found authority were those who came from wealthy backgrounds where they could receive education on history, languages, literature, and writing. Elizabeth Grymeston's family was no different, with her father being a substantial landowner (Oxford). She married her husband, Christopher Grymeston, sometime before 1584, though their marriage had to be kept a secret due to his position as a fellow at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge (Oxford). She had nine children, only one of whom survived, a son, who is also the addressee of *Miscelanea*. While her exact date of death is unknown, based on the poems she quotes from and the prefatory poem written by Simon Graham in *Miscelanea*, she died sometime between 1601 and 1604, around the age of 40 (Oxford). Although *Miscelanea* contains no original writing by Grymeston, the large range of literature and religious texts from which she pulls, both in English and other languages, shows Grymeston to be an educated woman, and her ability to bring these texts together into one, cohesive piece, shows her strength as a writer (Oxford). Grymeston uses these texts to give her son advice throughout the legacy, particularly religious advice, beginning with a dedicatory titled "To her loving Sonne, Bernye," and followed by fourteen chapters ranging in topics from "A pathetical speech of the person of Dives in the torments of hell," "A pathetical speech of the person of Dives in the torments of hell," and "Morning meditation, with sixteen sobs of a sorrowful spirit."

Elizabeth Joscelin, born in 1596, comes from a similarly wealthy background, being raised by her grandfather, Bishop William Chaderton, from the ages of 6-11 years old, who made

sure she was educated in languages, history, the liberal arts, and piety (Brown). After her grandfather's death, she lived with her father and stepmother until she married Taurell Joscelin, who owned a large estate, in 1616 (Brown). Joscelin continued her studies after her marriage for some time, but eventually gave up all of her studies except her religious ones, and when she found herself pregnant after six years of marriage, she wrote her legacy (Brown). Throughout her legacy, which includes an opening letter to her husband, Taurell, it is clear that Joscelin's inspiration for her legacy comes not only from a religious duty, but also a premonition that she will die while giving birth to her child. As her child was still unborn at the time she wrote *The Mothers Legacy*, Joscelin gives advice in raising both a boy and a girl, wanting a son to dedicate himself to ministry and wanting a daughter to have a more conventional girl's education than her own in areas such as embroidery and housewifery. Though Joscelin died before the legacy was finished, it is still worthy of comparison to the complete *Miscelanea*.

In Elizabeth Grymeston's 1604 *Miscelanea, Meditations, Memoratives*, Grymeston uses her position as a mother to justify her writing as a woman. On page A3, the first section of the book written by Grymeston, she says, "My dearest Son... there is no love so forcible as the love of an affectionate mother to her natural child: there is no mother can either more affectionately show her nature, or more naturally manifest her affection, than in advising her children out of her own experience, to eschew evil, and incline them to do that which is good" (Grymeston A3). Here, Grymeston is addressing her only surviving child, a son named Bernye. Unlike Bradstreet and Sharp, who were anticipating a wider audience reading their books, Grymeston is only anticipating her son reading *Miscelanea* and perhaps a few other family members. Furthermore, Grymeston also wrote her mother's advice book in anticipation of her death before her son

reached adulthood. Her text, like her son, will go on to exist without her. In this way, as also demonstrated in the quote above, Grymeston links the creation and cultivating of her text to the care and advising of her child. For Grymeston, writing her text is a motherly act, by nature of it giving advice to her child, and it is one of the many ways she can care for her child. Here, Grymeston also makes use of the idea of her writing and other motherly actions being “natural” to her as a woman and her mother. With the rise in popularity of the mother’s advice book in the seventeenth century, women like Grymeston particularly mothers, were allowed to write at the encouragement of religious leaders for women to provide their children with religious instruction (Travitsky x). By including several religious texts in her book, as well as morning and evening meditations for her son, Grymeston uses this newly given authority in order to write in a societally accepted manner. Grymeston’s justification of her writing as a motherly act, in addition to her religious justifications, creates her authority as a writer. Grymeston’s writing and subjects are undoubtedly feminine, both in content and medium, and by exploring her writing in a feminine way, Grymeston is able to maintain her authority as a feminine, motherly writer.

Grymeston, like Bradstreet and Sharp, also represents herself as an educated woman in *Miscelanea*. Her text is not a wholly original creation, nor does it represent itself to be; rather, Grymeston collects several well-known literary and religious texts, along with some of her own words, and brings them together to create *Miscelanea*. Throughout her third chapter, titled “A pathetic speech of the person of Dives in the torments of hell,” Grymeston quotes the 1532 Italian epic poem *Orlando Furioso* by Ludovico Ariosto. After each part she quotes, Grymeston inserts her own English translation, showing her to be educated in literature as well as Italian. After quoting the lines, “Miser chi mal oprando, si confida, ch'ognor star debbia il maleficio occulto,”

Grymeston then translates them to, “Wretched is he that thinks by doing ill, his evil deeds long to conceal and hide” (Ariosto; Grymeston C-2). In addition to the translation of this Italian epic poem, Grymeston also uses Latin throughout her text, heading her fifth chapter with the Latin phrase “Quid es; vides. Quid futurus sis; Cogita,” which translates to “What are you; You see. What do you want to be; think” (Grymeston C3). Grymeston follows this quote with her own words, saying, “what have our eyes and ears been, but open gates to send in loads of sin into our mind?” (Grymeston C3). Grymeston puts her own words and thoughts into conversation with this Latin quote, showing her ability, as an educated woman, to synthesize a text, while also showing her ability as a writer, to create her own text in response to another. She takes this a step further in her tenth chapter, in which she features parts of the English poem “What the Soule Is” by Sir John Davies. Rather than putting Davies’s lines first followed by her own text, Grymeston brings together Davies’s poetry with her own, creating one, new poem. The poem reads originally and newly as follows:

“Of The Soule”

The soule a substance and a body is,
 Which God himselfe doth in the body make,
 Which makes the man; or every man from
 this
 The nature of a man and naine doth take.
 And though the spirit be to the body knit,
 As an apt meane her power to exercise:
 Which are, lire, motion, sense, and will and
 wit,
 Yet she survives, although the body dies
 (Davies 29)

In *Miscelanea*

This soul’s a substance and a real thing,
 Which hath itself an actual work in night
 But neither from the senses power doth spring
 Nor from the bodies humors tempered right:
 In God himself doth in the bodies make,
 And man from this name of man doth take.
 (Grymeston D3-E)

Here, Grymeston combines her own text with Davies’s, creating a new text that resembles Davies’s work and her own. This combination of texts mirrors the combination of a mother and

father to create a child, allowing the creation of text to reflect the creation of children. In this way, Grymeston gives herself the authority to manipulate a man's text into one of her own, once again justifying her writing as a woman. In having her writing process echo the process of creating a childhood, Grymeston does not deviate from womanhood, motherhood, or femininity in her writing, but rather completes womanly, motherly, and feminine tasks through her writing. Her writing, like the author, becomes motherly, allowing Grymeston to take on a traditionally masculine task.

Grymeston also reflects on her motherly experience in *Miscelanea*, which builds her authority as a woman writer. Returning to the quote from the first chapter of her book, Grymeston claims, "there is no mother can either more affectionately show her nature... than in advising her children out of her own experience, to eschew evil, and incline them to do that which is good" (Grymeston A3). According to Grymeston, her experiences avoiding evil things and doing good have provided her with the ability to teach her children how to do these things as well. In chapter fourteen, titled "Memoratives," Grymeston gives her son advice for certain situations, implying experiences with these situations herself. As she states in her opening chapter, these situations all relate to avoiding evil and doing good. Among her advice, Grymeston tells her son, "In all temptations it is safer to fly, than to fight with Satan," and "Examine thy thoughts. If thou findest them to be good; there is the spirit: Quench not the spirit. If bad; forbid them entrance: for once admitted, they straightaway fortify, and are expelled with more difficulty, than not admitted" (Grymeston H). Grymeston herself has experienced temptations and successfully escaped them, and she has also expelled bad thoughts from her mind, now knowing that they are more difficult to expel once they enter her mind rather than not being allowed in at all. These ex-

periences give Grymeston the authority to speak about them and give advice to her son, furthering her ability and authority to write. Just as Sharp's experiences with many births give her the ability to give advice regarding midwifery, Grymeston's experiences with good and evil allow her to give advice as a mother about those same situations that could happen to her son in the future.

Grymeston also mentions briefly her experiences as a mother and the process of becoming a mother. In "To her loving Sonne, Bernye," at the beginning of *Miscelanea*, Grymeston makes mention of her other children who did not live to adulthood, saying "even in that my affectionate love, which diffused amongst nine children which God did lend me, is now united in thee, whom God hath onely left for my comfort" (Grymeston A3). For Grymeston, becoming a mother to Bernye was a difficult process which included the loss of eight children other than Bernye. Grymeston also describes Bernye as having a "violent" spirit and being a difficult child to take care of (Grymeston A3). Grymeston elaborates on this difficulty, saying, "as ever the love of a mother may challenge the performance of her demand of a dutifull childe;" Grymeston has experience in raising a difficult child while also loving a difficult child, and this experience of challenges in motherhood gives her authority to write (Grymeston B). Losing children and caring for them also establish Grymeston as a woman with a past and who has overcome challenges; becoming a mother nine times, even when these children died before reaching adulthood, still establishes Grymeston of a mother and woman with a myriad of experiences, giving her writing and the mother's advice book genre the credibility it needs coming from a woman author in a time when this style and genre of writing was on the rise.

Twenty years after *Miscelanea, Meditations, Memoratives* was published, the first edition of Elizabeth Joscelyn's *The Mother's Legacy to her Vnborn Childe* was printed in London. Like *Miscelanea*, *The Mother's Legacy* was written in anticipation of Joscelyn dying before her child reached adulthood and was meant to give advice to her child after she died. In many ways, Joscelyn's reasons for writing her book mirror her reasons for having a child, and conversely, her unexpected reasons for having a child reflect her unexpected reasons for writing *The Mother's Legacy*. In her opening, Joscelyn claims:

I knew it consisted not in honour, wealth, strength of body or friends (though all these are great blessings) therefore it had beene a weake request to desire thee onely for an heire to my fortune... Nor did an hope to dandle thy infancy move me to desire thee... But the true reason that I have so often kneeled to God for thee, is, that thou mightest bee an inheritour of the Kingdome of Heaven.

(Joscelyn 57)

Joscelyn's reason for having a child is for that child to be a Christian and to go to heaven. Joscelyn does not have a child in order to interact with it as an infant or for it to inherit her fortune. Her reasons are entirely selfless and based in her Christian religion. Joscelyn also believes that giving birth is all she has to do in order to be the mother to her child, and writing this advice book will only allow that legacy as a mother to live on. In writing her book, Joscelyn is not seeking to benefit herself in her writing, as she anticipates dying soon after her completion of it, much as she anticipates dying soon after giving birth to her child. Just as she does not have to live on in order to be the mother to her child, she does not have to live to see her book published

and receive criticism on it in order to be an author and to have a written text. She is not writing her book for anyone but her child, and she is not having her child for anyone except God. In addition to only having her child for God, her book is for telling her child how to be godly. In tracing these similarities between her treatment of her text and her advice to her child, the link between Joscelin's creation of text and her creation of a child becomes clear. Joscelin's text is another version of a motherly creation for Joscelin, and her role as a mother gives her the authority to make such a creation.

Joscelin creates her authority as a writer through several avenues, at times even claiming writing as her duty as a mother. While she concedes that her writing may not be as good as the writing in other mothers' advice books in publication, she claims that her being a mother specifically to the child to whom she writes is enough to give her authority on the subject of her child, and her love as a mother to that child may be enough to overcome any errors she makes in her writing (Joscelin 49; 61). Joscelin further elaborates on her reasons for writing shortly before beginning her first chapter of *The Mother's Legacy*, saying:

Againe, I may perhaps bee wondred at for writing in this kinde, considering there are so many exceellent bookes, whose least note is worth all my meditations. I confesse it, and thus excuse my selfe. I write not to the world, but to mine own childe, who it may be, will profit by a few weake instructions coming from a dead mother (who cannot every day praise or repove it as it deserves) than by farre better from much more learned. These things considered, neither the true knowledge of mine owne weaknesse, nor the feaere this may come to the worlds eie, and bring scorne upon my grave, can stay my hand from expressing how

much I covet that salvation. (Joscelin 61)

Here, Joscelin engages with apologia in order to defend her work against the negative expectations women writers faced, especially against the expectation that they did not speak publicly. As a mother, the world seeing her weaknesses in writing or speaking badly of her after her death cannot stop her from writing down how much she cares for her child's salvation. Similarly to Bradstreet in "The Author to Her Book" and Sharp in *Midwives*, Joscelin uses her hand as a metonym for her thoughts and her body. She cannot stop her mind as a mother from thinking about and coveting her child's salvation, and she cannot stop her hand from writing these thoughts down.

Joscelin also uses her own experience to direct how she wants her child to be raised and educated. If her child is a girl, Joscelin does not wish for her to be educated on anything outside of housewifery and writing, which is different from her own upbringing, in which she learned languages, history, and some of the liberal arts (Brown). If her child is a daughter, Joscelin says to her husband in her opening letter to him:

I desire her bringing up may bee learning the Bible, as my sisters doe, good housewifery, writing, and good workes: other learning a woman needs not: though I admire it in those whom God hath blest with discretion, yet I desired not much in my owne, having seen that sometimes women have greater portions of learning, than wisdom... (Joscelin 51)

Here, Joscelin reflects on her own experiences meeting women who have received unconventional educations, and through those experiences and interactions with other women, Joscelin can make an informed decision on what is best for her daughter. By having these experiences inform

her judgment, Joscelin has the authority to write to her unborn child and to give advice in how to raise it. As someone who has herself experienced being an educated daughter, Joscelin also has authority to speak on what kind of education is best for her daughter. Joscelin's conflation of writing and housewifery as equally desirable skills for her daughter to learn also helps create Joscelin's own authority to write. By comparing writing to the more traditionally feminine skills afforded to housewifery, Joscelin portrays it as an important, useful skill for a woman, and especially a wife and mother, to learn and use.

In the introduction to *The Mother's Legacy*, Joscelin's claims surrounding becoming a mother are parallel with her claims of becoming an author. Writing to her husband, Taurell Joscelin, Joscelin reflects on her pregnancy and suspicion of her impending death, saying, "I no sooner conceived an hope, that I should bee made a mother by thee... and shortly after followed the apprehension of danger that might prevent me from executing that care I so exceedingly desired" (Joscelin 47). Later in her introduction, Joscelin goes to say, "I writ this ensuing Letter to our little one, to whom I could not find a fitter hand to convey it than thine own, which maist with authority see the performance of this my little legacy, of which my Child is Executer" (Joscelin 49). Just as Joscelin is made a mother through her husband, she will also be made an author by him after her passing. For Joscelin, the audience of her writing is her unborn child, and it is through her husband that her writing will reach her intended audience. Just as it takes both Joscelin and her husband in order for her to create a child and become a mother, the two of them are also necessary for the conception of her book. *The Mother's Legacy* necessitates a mother and a father to come to fruition, and Joscelin's meditations on her motherhood and au-

thorship see her and her husband as the creators of her child and text. Both her text and her child are her and her husband's creations.

As a genre, the mother's advice book opened the door for writing by early modern women, particularly mothers; however, the writing and style it allowed were still limited by expectations surrounding women and writing. Its conflict with the belief that women should not speak publicly, as well as the belief that women who were writing were neglecting their duties as mothers to their children, resulted in women like Grymeston and Joscelyn apologizing for their writing while still trying to justify its existence. As both of these women wrote their books in anticipation of their deaths, creating legacies for their children serves a way of fulfilling their motherly duties to them, not neglecting them. Their motherhood is central in them gaining the authority to write, and also serves as a source for analogies throughout their legacies between their motherhood and authorship and their children and their texts. While both Grymeston's and Joscelyn's texts exist as mothers' advice books, different from father's advice books in their focus on religious instruction, Grymeston uses their license she gains through the genre to write beyond religious instruction and work with the literature of others in order to create her own. Within the singular genre and coming from the similar authors of mothers anticipating their deaths, *Miscelanea* and *The Mothers Legacy* both manage to stand as their own creations.

4. Conclusion

As a theme, as well as a creator of authority and means of justification, motherhood in early modern women's writing is central, and across genres, it allowed women writers to navigate that obstacles their critics laid of for them due to their gender. The women behind these writings, particularly Sharp, Bradstreet, Joscelin, and Grymeston, in using motherhood as a metaphor to understand their texts as creations, portrayed their possibly subversive writings as extensions of their expected wifely and motherly duties, making it more difficult for their critics to restrict them through conventional ideas of femininity and authorship. This subversion and circumvention of it, however, should not be taken to mean that these women were intentionally writing as a means to upset conventional gender norms surrounding writing in the early modern period. Taking audience into account, most of these writers did not intend for their works to be read publicly, and their intentions in writing them were authentic extensions of their duties to their husbands and children. These women were not looking to overtake the masculine literary world; however, their writings created an entirely new sector of it, changing genres that were once exclusive to men into forms of writing with feminine and masculine counterparts, not longer existing in homogenous states of masculine writing.

Metaphorically, motherhood made these women's texts more acceptable and more feminine when the early modern literary world was dominated by texts written by men. Comparing texts to children, nurtured and cared for by their authors, resisted the view that women who were writing were necessarily not taking care of their children or their households. Their texts were their children, subject to similar criticisms children received in the seventeenth century that were connected to their mothers. In using this metaphor, these women authors were not denying the

gendered standards imposed onto them, but they were embracing them and weaving them into the themes of their texts. After all, partially for Bradstreet and most certainly for Joscelyn and Grymeston, these texts were made for their children. Grymeston's address to her son, Bernye, makes it clear that no amount of plausible criticism can stop her from writing to her son so that he may hear from her after she passes. Joscelyn, too, writes to her unborn child as a part of her motherly duties, and she cannot stop her pen from writing her legacy. By writing to their children in order to fulfill their duties to them as mothers (and consequentially as women and wives) their texts represent metaphorically both the necessary tasks of a woman and the expected creations of women in the seventeenth century, making their subversion difficult for their contemporary critics to navigate.

Despite these compliant intentions, all of these women engaged with apology in order to explain their writing, despite its justification through motherhood and the support women like Joscelyn and Grymeston received from religious leaders. These apologies were in conflict with self-portrayal, however, as these woman simultaneously apologized for their writing and then continued it. Especially for Sharp, whose text extended an incredible length, her apology for writing is at odds with the extent and detail of it. Due to their existence throughout these texts, apologias, in their attempts to uphold women's writing as obliging to to rules set onto it by the literary world, further sustained women's writing as existing within its own genres with its own characteristics, setting it apart from texts written by men. These apologias, paired along with strong religious themes, and themes surrounding motherhood, children, and authorship all helped set Sharp, Bradstreet, Grymeston, and Joscelyn's writings apart from the corresponding man-authored texts that came before them and with whom they coexisted. These assorted layers of justi-

fication that women used worked together to bring about these new genres, and their concurrent workings toward creating authority all helped establish women's writing as legitimate, despite simultaneous criticisms to the contrary.

Looking back to Cavendish, who described her book in terms of it being her own child, and now completing this thesis, it is of course tempting to examine how my own justifications and sense of authority in authorship have been transformed by writing this essay. My stance as a woman in the twenty-first century, studying at a college that was made for women from its beginning (though certainly only a certain type of woman), makes it difficult to understand exactly the restrictions and impositions with which these women had to wrestle in order to write their fully-formed texts. I also understand, however, from my relatively privileged position in the twenty-first century, the very specific narratives that were allowed in this wide variety of texts and styles—ones that were exclusive of poor women, women with disabilities, women of color, and women who did not engage with traditionally feminine tasks or subject matters. As a writer, I seek to make my writing worthy of being a senior tutorial and a well-polished reflection of myself, and I do not need to apologize for my writing being subversive of my identity as a woman, nor do I need to justify its existence through my fulfillment of my feminine duties, such as being a wife or mother. I certainly hope people enjoy reading it, and like Cavendish, I would like it to be seen as reflective of myself, though I certainly hope that reflection says more of me and my text than us “not being wanton, or rude.”

To us twenty-first century readers, becoming a mother can seem like more of an obstacle to authorship than it does an advancement, and in the seventeenth century, when childbirth was often dangerous and posed the possibility of death for the mother and infant, as we see in Sharp,

Grymeston, and Bradstreet, its existence as an obstacle seems to stand. Within the context of these women coming from wealthy backgrounds, however, they all had access to better midwives than many early modern women (though many women still died under the care of well-trained midwives), allowing motherhood and their life's experiences to lead them in their writing rather than cut their writing careers short. Furthermore, motherhood, in being one of the least subversive acts a woman could do in the seventeenth century, seems like an odd launching point for feminine authorial license. By comparing texts to children, however, these women were able to equate a compliant act with a subversive one, allowing some of the expectations surrounding mothering children to transfer as expectations surrounding writing text. Now that I have thoroughly completed my analysis not only of two mothers' advice books, but also put *Midwives* and Bradstreet's poetry in conversation with each other, I feel that my take on this topic of motherhood in early modern women's writing is ready to face its critics, "in hopes Some may like her," though for her, I hope her praise comes from her new ideas, and not just her ability to look at or conform to old ones.

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