

'A dumme thyng': The posthumous voice as rhetoric in the mothers' legacies of Dorothy Leigh and Elizabeth Joscelyn

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'She ended her prayers, speech, and life together, rendring her soule into the hand of her Redeemer, and leauing behind her unto the world a sweet perfume of good name, and to her onely childe...this Manuell, being a deputed Mother for instruction, and for solace a twinne-like sister, issuing from the same Parent, and seeing the light about the same time'.

Thomas Goad, 'The Approbation' to Elizabeth Joscelyn's
The Mother's Legacie to her Unborn Childe, 1924 (sig a6v).

The more widely known examples of early modern mothers in the proximity of death, on the very brink of absence, are theatrical constructions; Webster's Duchess of Malfi, condemned, leaves final advice for the physical health of her son and spiritual health of her daughter, '...giv'st my little boy / Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl / Say her prayers ere she sleep' (IV.ii), asserting her maternal voice beyond the grave. In the final scene of *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare's Hermione becomes, almost literally, a dumb thing that speaks and, when she speaks, addresses only her daughter (V.iii). The idea of the mother on the precipice of death or, in Hermione, seeming to inhabit both living and dead at once, provides a moment of liminality in which the maternal power can linger. For seventeenth-century mother's legacy writers, this power can be preserved beyond the grave. Rejecting masculine narratives of 'lateness' as characteristic of genius when studying writing in the proximity of death, this chapter will instead explore the possibilities of a specifically belated, posthumous style, one that is deeply rhetorical. For Dorothy Leigh and Elizabeth Joscelyn, as other mothers' legacy writers, addressing their child-reader in the future tense posits their voices in a time in which their physical body will no longer exist. In order for the voice to survive, they fashion it into a prosopopoeia, and thus the 'dumme thyng' (Sherry, 1550, sig E2v) can speak: the dumb dead, the dumb woman.

Frequently described as a genre or subgenre, despite the diversity of their manifest and material forms, any instruction from mother to child, whether in letter, diary, published tract or poem, can be classified as a mother's legacy. However, the awkwardness of such

classification emerges in the contradictory attempts that have been made to place this 'genre' among other contemporary works. Sometimes viewed as a manual, sometimes a devotional, rarely (but perhaps most interestingly) they are seen as life writing. For example, in their anthology of early modern women's texts, Helen Ostovich and Elizabeth Sauer (2004) class mothers' legacies clearly as manuals, more specifically grouping them in a paired chapter/section with medical manuals, and arguing that both are subcategories of the advice book genre and therefore belong together in study. In so doing, mothers' legacies are excluded from both the religious and life-writing sections of the book and, inevitably, their status as advice manual is foregrounded. In contrast, by including Michelle Dowd's chapter on Elizabeth Richardson's *Legacie* in their key collection, *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England*, Dowd and her co-editor, Julie Eckerle (2013), have assigned Richardson's text exactly where Ostovich and Sauer have decided it does not fit. In fact, in her introductory paragraph, Dowd sets down Richardson's text as having 'a place within a subgenre of women's life writings in early modern England that has come to be known as mothers' legacies' (Dowd 2013, 115). Confidently, then, she ascribes these texts generally as life writings, seeing them – and she particularly refers to Leigh and Joscelin here – as 'publication of the self'. This logic is extremely persuasive – more so, in many ways, than ascribing these texts to medical-style manuals. Nevertheless, in each case, the urge to ascribe genre is powerful and established early in each critical approach to mothers' legacies, demonstrating the need to categorise these works more clearly than seems possible via their own self-evidence.

Mothers' legacies are, in the simplest sense, definitely 'late'; they are effectively letters to provide maternal guidance for the surviving child or children in the event, often clearly approaching, of the mothers' death. This 'genre' (I shall return to the vexedness of such a distinction later) became popular in the seventeenth century, at a time when burgeoning mass publication brought fashion for cheaply-produced manuals and devotional texts and, indeed, a defining moment in the pathway to women's access to publication. If 'lateness is', as Said sees it, 'being at the end, fully conscious, full of memory, and also very (even preternaturally) aware of the present,' (Said 2006, 14), then belatedness adds a projected future, an effect of the prophetic in the establishment of a posthumous voice. This voice is a deployment, I will argue, of prosopopoeia or at least, how Gavin Alexander aptly puts it, the 'spooky side' of this literary-rhetorical device (Alexander 2010, 110). Timeliness, a word we all too often seek to hear about our own work, is key to Said's and subsequent discourses of late style, the idea that a late body

creates a late work that is in some sense related to its appropriateness for its age or indeed its power to transcend it (Said 2006, 5). Posthumousness, though, is anaphoric. We can continually replace the life or the text with a constructed memory that refers back and replaces others before it.

As I write, in 2016, then, it is a perfect moment to reflect on this process; it is a significant literary anniversary. No, I do not refer to Shakespeare or Cervantes. 2016 is exactly 400 years since that significant moment in early modern literary culture: the first publication of what was to become the greatest bestseller written by a woman that the seventeenth century would see: *A Mother's Blessing*, by Dorothy Leigh. Reprinted 23 times between 1616 and 1674, Leigh's book remained a stalwart of many an eighteenth and even nineteenth century home's library. This year serves only to highlight the eclipse of significant female-authorship behind the blazing star of *certain* male counterparts. It also brings to sharp focus the idea of memory and commemoration and what being posthumous really means for a text, its author and its reader. Jeremy Tambling's articulation of the anachronism of posthumous texts is extremely useful:

The posthumous challenges a life-death distinction and the order in which that distinction is phrased; it throws chronology into disarray, when the works of long dead writers suddenly appear later, out of 'time'. (Tambling 2001, 7)

How far is this effect, though, created by style within the work, and how much by the moment and awareness of the reader? In Leigh and Joscelin's mothers' legacies, I argue, the anachronistic voice is a rhetorical construction, an instance of prosopopoeia. Tambling also notes that 'posthumous writings gather a fetishised value' (Tambling 2001, 7) and in the case of the legacies, this takes on a sacred quality, in that the texts are formed partly as devotional in nature, the text/voice gaining authority via—literally—the death of its author. My broad focus is the deliberate construction of future 'memory' by an individual writing in 'posthumous' or 'belated' (as opposed to late) style. This memory is to be imbedded in both their literary and their social milieu as well as in critical and public posterity.

Prosopopoeia, or 'prosopopy' was very much *de rigueur* in early modern religious debates, sometimes providing specific definitions of its meaning and function, often linked inextricably with apostrophe. Sherry, in his influential *Treatise of schemes & tropes* defines it as 'when we fayne person, communication, or affecte of a man or of a beaste, to a dumme thyng, or that hath no bodye, or to a dead man' (1550, sig E2r-E3v). The figure appears often in new English

translations and commentaries from the mid-late sixteenth century. For example, in Rosdell's English translation of Calvin's commentary on St Paul, he expresses how, 'by the figure *prosopopeia* he bringeth in all the partes of the worlde, as though they were indued with sence: that wee might the rather bee ashamed of our sottishnesse' (1583, 104). He sees the figure as a powerful force for 'imbu[ing]' hope and piety in humankind via comparison with the hope of 'dumb' beasts. In Dudley Fenner's (1584) *Art of Rhetoric*, *prosopopoeia* is clearly defined into two subsections, perfect and imperfect:

Prosopopeia or a Feyning of the person is whereby we doo feyne another person speaking in our speache.

And It is double,

Imperfect.

Perfecte.

Imperfect is when the speache of another person is set down lightlie and indirectlie...A perfect *Prosopopeia* is when the whole feyning of the person is set downe in our speache. (1584, sig D4r)

The posthumous voice of mothers' legacies is the latter, a 'perfect' *prosopopoeia*, in which a 'feyn[ed]' voice for the dead mother is sustained throughout. Significantly, the figure appears often in the running debates over the existence or otherwise of intrinsic faith in infants, where *prosopopoeia* is proposed to be what is meant when the infant is assigned faith, not in terms of a speaking voice but of assumed belief. In mothers' legacies, constructing the child (incapable of voice in the case of Joscelyn's unborn baby) as reader and the mother-voice as writer ('incapable' of writing or speaking, once dead) gives greater license to the female voice via posthumous rhetoric.

Leigh, a passionate advocate of further Protestant reform, as clearly articulated in her *Blessing*, and Joscelyn, arguably less political in her more devotional language, had both had access to a solid religious education and, particularly we know in Joscelyn's case, one which was much more far reaching than commonly available to girls (Brown, 1999, 97). We can assume, then, that both women had a comprehensive knowledge of many religious texts and debates on reform and of course were able to quote the Bible, it seems, virtually by rote, as demonstrated in Joscelyn's manuscript, which shows misspellings suggesting that Biblical passages were

recalled rather than transcribed from an open text (Brown 1999, 98). This reading would have led both women to have a clear awareness of prosopopoeia as a figure that was not only, as we tend to think of it now, a literary or dramatic device but an important figure in theological rhetoric. Both Joscelin and Leigh in fact deploy a range of overt rhetorical devices, questioning, arguing and persuading. Leigh even liberally and audaciously assumes Christ's voice via sub-prosopopoeia. Leigh rejects, for example, both Catholic reliance on confession and Calvinist notions of predestination, speaking her disapproval via Christ's 'voice':

Hee that is an vngodly person, a swearer, a drunkard, a prophaner of the Sabbaoth, false in religion, carelesse in life, and yet hopes to be saued by me, his hope is in vaine, and grounded vp|on no foundation; for I neuer made promise to saue any such. (190-1).

Leigh's audacious annexation of Christ as a speaking agent in the *Blessing* is itself a form of prosopopoeia, while her prosopopoeic appropriation of her own dead self constitutes her rhetorical style, achieving a textual resurrection of her own. Yet her conviction that she will not live to see her words read is far less pronounced than Joscelin's 'apprehension of danger' (sig Br). The latter has a strong belief in her impending death and her voice is therefore more, as Alexander would put it, 'spooky' (2010, 110), than Leigh's reformist rhetoric.

The early modern female writer must excuse her act of writing. In both Leigh and Joscelin's cases, writing is presented as permissible in the extreme circumstances of fulfilling a maternal and pious duty when facing the proximity of death. This is, arguably, not only a result of their personal circumstances but epochal, impersonal, in the context of the specific barriers to female publication of the era in which they wrote. Their approach is definitively proleptic, a feature identified by Gordon McMullan in his taxonomy of late writing (2007, 45), but here, as opposed to the contradictions of late style, this is prolepsis in its most literal sense; Joscelin and Leigh are fundamentally pre-emptive in rhetorical style. In Joscelin's case, though, unlike any case study of late style that I have come across, the death to which she is facing proximity is specifically violent and brutal, and she perceives and expresses this, her fear of 'the painfullnesse of that kinde of death' both physically and in losing the relationship with her child (sig Br). In fact, the legacies are simply proleptic texts. Rhetorically speaking, they are proleptic both in their prefatory material and in their following content, Leigh, in her emphatic, even radical, religious reformism as well as maternal advice and Joscelin, in her confident religious instruction. Second, they are proleptic in the sense of their anachronistic voice. Usefully, McMullan identifies late style as a celebration of a 'particular liminality' (2007, 10) in

the 'proximity of death', as an artist, writer or musician enters a phase in which they inhabit a constant state of being on the brink of nothingness. Yet this liminal moment holds, for the early modern female writer, a heightened significance, one which spills into the text itself in that her 'voice' is only ever to be her dead voice. Her style is, then, more than late; it is belated, a definitively posthumous voice.

Jennifer Heller, disagrees with Sylvia Brown, Wendy Wall (1993) and Teresa Feroli (1994), all of whom have similarly remarked on the textual and physical death as the prerequisite requirement for legacies' existence; she asserts that we should instead examine the legacies in the context of *ars moriendi*, which she defines simply as an 'offer [of] religious consolation' (2011, 157). Heller sees this as in some opposition to those other critics' readings, arguing that the ultimate goal is 'not the oblivion of death, but eternal life in heaven' (2011, 157). However, the two need not be mutually exclusive. In taking such critics as Brown, Wall and Feroli literally in their comments on the writers' deaths, Heller has assumed that these readings *exclude* the notion of contemplative death within these narratives of the approach of physical oblivion. What is missing from the equation, perhaps, is the voice of legacy as a clear rhetorical ascription of a voice to a 'dumme thyng', prosopopoeia, as a powerful and established figure in religious reasoning. The 'dumme thyng' is, I argue, both the silent dead and, also, the silent female. Literally, of course, Heller is right that these legacies tend more to contemplate and prepare for death than to desire it. However, Wall and others argue not that women sought death to validate their text but rather that it was to make the texts, frankly, both palatable and acceptable to their readers. I agree. However, Leigh and Joscelyn also deftly sidestep censure by utilising a 'perfect' prosopopoeia, ironically a figure Samuel Fisher was to describe in 1653 as one 'which can be properly be done by none but possibly by men at years' (72).

Women's presentation of their written selves via prefatory disclamation reflects the need to define themselves as intellectually inferior or childlike in order to justify publication. In Joscelyn's letter to her husband, for instance, she writes,

I thought of writing, but then mine owne weaknes appeared so manifestly, that I was ashamed, and durst not undertake it. But when I could find no other means to expresse my motherly zeale, I encouraged my selfe with these reasons

First, that I wrote to a Childe, & though I were but a woman, yet to a childs judgement, what I understood might serve for a foundation to better learning. (sig B2r-B3v)

Here, Joscelin begins her list of justifications for her writing, Joscelin identifies her projected readership, a child, as the first reason she is free to write. Her second, that it shall remain private, I shall return to a little later on. Her third and final and 'chief' justification, though, is that she has a pious intent and that what she is to produce is her 'little legacy' (sig B3r) to her child, having explained earlier that 'death might deprive [her] of time' (sig B2r). Her 'little legacy' is, then, associated with her 'little one' (sig C9v), her unborn child and both materially exist only in a projected future after her death, just as Leigh, too, refers to her 'little booke' (sig A8v). A disclaimer that a woman's style is going to be lower, diminutive, 'little', more childlike than a man's, is fairly common in women's prefatory comments, though of course to take this at face value of a belief in such would be reductive. Access to publication, or even readership of any kind, came at a cost. A childlike or a return to juvenile concerns, archetypal of late writing (McMullan, 2007, 26) is impossible to identify in these texts, where the women had no perceived justification for writing *until* in proximity to death. Moreover, in Joscelin's case, she presents herself as inherently childlike to pre-empt the prevention, or ensuing censure, of a female written agency 'going public'.

How tempting it might be to see a mother's legacy as the tip of a creative iceberg, synecdochic of a hidden body of work. However, in reading early modern women's writing, we more often we find that we can ill-understand the development of a body of work, should we wish to, where only fragments of the work, or a single published piece survives. We can only contemplate what might be possible to understand if it were possible to compare stylistic features of the condemned mother in *The Tragedy of Mariam* with Elizabeth Cary's own mother's legacy, which, while assured it once existed in manuscript, seems long ago lost for good.¹ Even legacy writers who survived a time beyond their text (such as Elizabeth Richardson) provide a vexation, as the legacy is no longer 'late' in the same sense. A perfect storm resulted in Leigh and Joscelin's legacies, namely: a. the status of posthumous at publication, b. the education required, c. their state of motherhood and d. the opportunity to write a lengthy text at all; this was rarely reached more than once in a life, if at all, and at that, at life's end.

¹ Reference to such a legacy is made in Cary's daughter's *The Lady Falkland: A Life*, an unpublished manuscript held at Archives Départementales du Nord (MS2059).

Mothers' Legacies are not only accessing accepted female discourses of motherhood and religious piety but of the notion that women were perceived as having – for want of a better word – more ably mastered the art of dying (well) than men. Dying is a skill in which the pious early modern woman could excel. In the posthumous, then, as long as piety is maintained, the female voice can thrive as an uncanny form of prosopopoeia, in which the dumb can speak. As Tambling articulates, 'statements from beyond the tomb...complicate Christianity's life-death distinctions with their own way of asserting an afterlife' (2001, 7). This of course forms the basis of Hamlet's contradictory ideas on posthumous agency, both driven by a posthumous voice of apparent verity and arguing that death is the destination from whence 'no traveller returns' (III.i). The anachronism and contradiction of posthumousness is central to how we read legacy writing but, in the case of women writers, writing the posthumous monopolises on the notion of women as exceeding men in general in the art of dying well, a rare female dominance in early modern fashioning of the self. For women writers, perhaps, the anachronistic voice – and especially the voice of the dead mother – is desirable because, when inextricably linked with a pious intent, it positions the writer where women were best placed to advise: on death and maternity. Furthermore, the piety of *memento mori*, asserted in particular by Joscelyn's first editor, Thomas Goad, in describing her ordering her winding sheet (sig A5v) and wrapping herself in it after birth (sig B9r), could to an extent be both achieved and negotiated by constructing a voice from beyond the grave. Belated, posthumous writing, is uncanny and anachronistic. Posthumous voices are, to borrow Tambling's words again, 'out of time' (Tambling 2001, 7). I argue that belated writings are rhetorical; they are perfect constructions of prosopopoeic voice that can defy the restrictions of its living author. Rather than trying to read their writing as late style, virtually impossible in dealing with early modern women's writing, we can read both Leigh and Joscelyn, rather, as writing the posthumous, deliberately 'belating' their work, constructing a dead version of their voices as the keenest means by which that voice survives.

This, of course, is an obvious preoccupation of early modern writing, when preservation of self so often becomes inextricable from preservation of text. However, stylistically, the idea of belatedness is useful when exploring the text both of Leigh and Joscelyn in more detail, particularly Joscelyn, whose prophetic awareness of her imminent death 'when I am gone', shapes her work more hauntingly than Leigh's, who at times seems to believe she may well live to see its publication. Danielle Clarke has argued convincingly the influence of 'ancient' texts,

styles and figures in shaping women's speaking and writing in the early modern period, and makes reference to prosopopoeia in the context of Ovid's 'profound interest in the question of a female voice or, less kindly the poetic potential of prosopopoeia' (Clarke 2007, 74), marking the figure as part of a masculine, misogynistic discourse and leaving it at that. However, not to dispute this general approach, mothers' legacy writers' use of self-prosopopoeia harnesses the ideal of woman's dumbness, yoking it to that of the dumbness of the dead, and by doing this do achieve a rhetorical voice that, when added to the acceptable discourses of motherhood and devotion ostensibly central to their texts, successfully achieve both material and influential survival for their texts.

In the mothers' legacies both of Leigh and of Joscelin, the writing is, in the former case, that of a presumably mortally ill woman, 'seeing [her] selfe out of this world' (sig A6r) and, in the latter, of a pregnant one. Joscelin in particular is often seen as uncannily prophetic in her assumption that she was not long for the mortal world, an interpretation her editor begins, 'the course of her life was a perpetuall meditation of death, amounting almost to a propheticall sense of her dissolution' (a4r), thus establishing Joscelin as fixed on her own good death, as any pious person ought to be, but also uncannily aware of impending death in her youth. Considering rough maternal mortality statistics (Brown, 1999, 91-2) for the time, she had a better chance of survival than death, yet we neither know her state of health nor on what private information she based her apparently prophetic pessimism in terms of her own mortal life. Indeed, the six years between her wedding and her pregnancy may imply that there had been previous complications or pregnancy losses. In a way, though, in repeatedly referring to Joscelin's attitude to her own mortality as prophetic, we might miss a key issue in the tool this provides for her own writing agency.

Posthumousness, if only that were a real word, is at this time a state that allowed voice and publication, under certain circumstances, that was inaccessible to women writers in the prime of life. Though 'old age' and proximity to death were concepts much further apart, of course, for women than men: childbearing age was the most treacherous of periods in a woman's life, while the equivalent age likely to be the least treacherous for men. As Sylvia Brown (1999, 91-2) has observed, it was not the actual statistical risk of death so much as the painfulness of it should it occur that may have been the basis for the fear of death manifested by early modern women of childbearing age and situation. However, certainly we read from Joscelin's legacy

that pregnancy was a time of contemplation of and preparation for death. Brown refers to Joscelin as writing 'in the shadow of death' and that 'she gains authority through her proximity to death' (1999, 91-2). This phrase, 'proximity to death', used in discourses of lateness to indicate the awareness of a fast-approaching mortal end as an influence on creativity and style, here becomes central to Joscelin's very means of textual production and, ultimately, its transmission. Joscelin, in addressing her unborn child directly, deploys apostrophe where the subject is not yet sentient. This both absent and present entity is perhaps just as likely never to have life as she is to die, assuming her mortal fears were prophetic as opposed to medical in basis. The child is a conjured second person in the sense that Leigh's named sons are not. Joscelin's baby, by virtue of its pre-natal state, is also sexless, allowing a unique fluidity in address that transgresses expected gendered codes.

Most critics writing on mothers' legacies, such as Wall and Dowd, assert that impending death was, for early modern women, a key factor in the shifting of voice from private to public and a key force in constructing that agency we read in the surviving texts, facilitated by physical erasure. Dowd summarises this in arguing, 'For these women, the publication of the self often implied its erasure, either through the rhetorical transference of agency from mother to child or through the physical loss of agency at death' (2013, 116). But surely this agency, this writing of an ethereal voice, is a construction in the tradition of the self-penned epitaph, the most lasting (and arguably) successful form of public self-fashioning. It is fascinating to find Greenblatt's (1980, 2005) seminal phrase (of course, notoriously masculine in its original rationale, before the revisions of the second edition began to address the imbalance) noticeably missing from most criticism on mothers' legacies.

Sylvia Brown points out that both Leigh and Joscelin, 'rely heavily on the rhetorical effect of producing what seems to be a present, speaking voice' (Brown 1999, v). The implied verity of a voice from beyond the grave, outside the preoccupations and temptations of mortal existence, is a common figure in early modern literature and drama; we need only once again bring Hamlet's struggle with his father's supernatural voice to mind. However, this aspect of the posthumous voice, the idea of transcendence of mortal distraction and an implication of truth, is not a complete analysis of the meaning of the technique in the context of rhetorical and literary understanding in its own time. Despite pointing out this preternatural rhetorical power and going on to draw attention in her following sentence to Leigh's 'affecting to address

Satan directly' (Brown 1999, v), Brown does not read either, it would seem, in the context of specific rhetorical figures so recognisable to an educated early modern reader. Both writers' deployment of prosopopoeia and apostrophe suggest a clear rhetorical purpose and awareness. This being said, what that purpose *is* actually contentious and brings us back, in a sense, to the vexed question of the texts' assignation to a genre. If the purpose is to instruct, is it to instruct children on their religious journey or fellow women in their approach to death? Or, far more broadly, it might be possible to interpret Leigh and Joscelyn as radical in their assertion of female agency. What I would suggest, though, is that by constructing a posthumous or belated voice, mother's legacy writers are figuratively throwing their voices across to the posthumous moment, in a recognisable, skilfully crafted self-prosopopoeia.

To be posthumous, both Leigh and Joscelyn moved their writing from private to public sphere. In dealing with women's writing, its status as manuscript (*qua* private) or print (*qua* public) is constantly under scrutiny in how we read the text we now have, whatever the form in which we now consume it. Exemplifying John Keats' 'When this warm scribe my hand is in the grave' ('The Fall of Hyperion', line 18), Tambling asserts that handwriting is fundamentally different from the printed word in dealing with posthumous texts:

Handwriting cannot be seen as alive before it is translated into print. The hand will be in the grave when it has turned the words into handwriting. The activity of writing also makes both the subject, spoken of in the synecdoche of the hand, and the subject-matter posthumous. The subject loses authority over utterance in the flow of textuality; the subject-matter becomes posthumous because the activity of writing turns that into the past. The activity of reading in turn, turning the text into the past, further makes the reader posthumous. (Tambling 2001, 16)

This is not the only moment in which Tambling draws on ideas of the posthumous text rendering its reader, too posthumous. The 'good death' being narrated and evidenced textually in both Leigh and Joscelyn's texts is, in this sense, achieved vicariously by their readers, at a time when this was a central tenet of Protestant piety. Joscelyn's legacy was allegedly (according to Goad) discovered after her death. Does this tale delicately conceal the idea of her intention to publish, or did she indeed write her prefatory letter to her husband and her legacy to her unborn child only for family consumption as she claims, it being only 'to my owne, and in priuate sorte' (sig B3v)? Brown sees it as an 'irony that Joscelyn's preventive measures, her laying up of her exhortations in written words, made her text available not only to her child,

but to the world' (1999, 92). Yet this assumes that Goad's tale, and her own prefatory letter, is entirely accurate and that she wrote the legacy as an emphatically private piece. Surely this might equally convincingly be read as pre-emptive rhetoric.

Having, as I earlier quoted, justified her writing by its intended readership, a child, Joscelin's second justification, which appears slightly differently in her manuscript pre-edit and becomes ironic in print (sig B3v), is the claim that she is justified in writing by the fact that she writes privately to 'my own not to the world'. Leigh is fundamentally different in her approach to publication; her wry justification being:

But when I had written these things unto you, and had (as I thought) something fulfilled your Fathers request, yet I could not see to what purpose it should tend, unlesse it were sent abroad to you: for should it be left with the eldest, it is likely the youngest should haue but little part in it. Wherefore setting aside all feare, I haue aduentured to shew my imperfections to the view of the World, not regarding what censure shall for this bee laid upon me, so that heerein I may shew myself a louing Mother, and a dutifull Wife.

(sig A6r-A7v)

At this point, Leigh writes with awareness of earthly consequences of her voice venturing 'abroad' but does not fear this compromises her position spiritually or as a 'dutiful wife'. Thus Leigh elides private and public while avoiding reprehension by excusing her public voice as essential to her domestic and religious duty. Yet the voice that survives was always a rhetorical construction, an assignation of the voice to the 'dumb thing': the dead and the woman. The prefatory disclamation of the act of writing, the stated proximity of death together present the text as imitating confession and thus imbues its voice with implied authenticity. The reader, in gaining the ear of the child, gains its innocence and malleability towards a pious life; in complicity with the mother's voice, then 'lives through' the good death she is attempting to secure, both for herself and for her child. Following this logic a little further, then, mother's legacies are not so much advice for children or templates for motherhood but rather they are manuals of dying.

Birth and death are so close in the mothers' legacies as, at times, to lead to elision, particularly and literally for Joscelin. The future tense child has the future-tense posthumous mother-text as a voice that remains unchanging and unchallenged. The trope of motherhood for the creation of text is pervasive in many surviving texts of early modern female writers. Taking the

role of creation of human life that is both functionally and ideologically ascribed to the state of being female, its use as a justification for, or parallel with, written creation is rhetorically effective and hard to dismantle without undermining that key premise, that the female function is motherhood. Most sustainedly and crucially demonstrated in *Eliza's Babes* (anon., 1652), the technique is fairly widespread as an early modern woman's justification of her writing. Both Leigh and Joscelin deploy it; their prefatory disclamation, their diminishment of their work into something childlike in substance and in intention. However, in the case of the legacy, it is also significant temporally: their dead, anachronistic voice is of the future, rather than the past, and presents a birth of written agency via the death of physical form. The pun of 'labour' as childbirth and 'labour' as writing is commonly deployed and is crucial to the presentation of the female voice in both legacies, though far more pronouncedly in Leigh. She rhetorically questions, 'can any man blame a mother (who indeed brought forth her childe with much paine) though she labour again till Christ bee formed in them?' (11). In so doing, she pre-emptively criticism over female writing by proleptically aligning it, as dutiful labour, with both childbirth and spiritual labour, both of which are required qualities for archetypal, functional womanhood. Leigh's prefatory poem, using the emblematic figure of the hardworking bee, similarly alludes to woman's labours, though with her characteristic (if rarely critically noted) humour:

For why, my pain's as great
 To write this little book to you
 (the world may think indeed)
 As it will be at any time
 For you the same to read. (ig A8v)

The 'pain' of writing the 'little' book (like Joscelin's 'little one' and 'little legacy') is worthy and worthwhile. The act of writing – and that of reading – become legitimate and worthy labours, bringing both pain and benefit. The posthumous mother's voice, though, can be as assertive as it might: the child cannot outgrow or over-rule it. The labour that produces the 'little book' fixes maternal authority at its time of most potency, before any claim for independence. While, especially in the case of sons, maternal authority is always destined to be outgrown, by fixing the implied reader in the state of childhood, the maternal voice of the mother's legacy can retain authority and influence. By this means, moreover, female authority in a patriarchal political philosophy, domestic maternal duties (physical and spiritual nurturing), may surreptitiously spill out of the domestic sphere of the home as it 'abroad' into the public world

of publication and the voice becomes authoritative beyond the guidance of the very young child. By this voice being posthumous, however, censure can be avoided.

Both Leigh and Joscelin, while at times presenting the archetypal expectations of the limitations of female intellect, education and power, at others challenge these assumptions. Both assert their minds as transcendent of death, in that their constructed intellectual voice is the remaining preservation of the self, while always qualifying the mind as a tool of religious education and therefore intrinsic to their own virtue and piety. Leigh writes

since Nature telleth me, that I cannot long be here to speak unto you, and this my mind will continue long after me in writing; and yet not my mind, but I seek to put you in minde of the words of our Saviour Christ. (12)

Here, Leigh justifies her proleptic 'mind' by eliding it with Christ's words, her own prosopopoeic voice subsumed, therefore, by Christ's, the only cheater of death. Joscelin, too, is of course using the reason of piety as an excuse for her active voice, even advising her own daughter (if her child is female) that she 'shouldest scarce speak but when thou answerest' (69) and deploys the standard figure of a woman of too much learning like a ship with too much sail (C9v). Yet she hints at the benefit not only of piety but of education and wisdom several times, such as in her polemical attack on pride and fashion, in which she warns disapprovingly that 'you will heare a well drest woman, (for that is the stile of honour) more commended than a wise or learned or religious woman', which could lead to following such a path. Her inclusion of education, though, is erased from the print, where editorial intervention has replaced 'learned' with 'honest' (sig D4r), effectively expunging her positive implications for female education. She assures her potential daughter 'If thou beest a daughter thou maist perhaps thinke I haue lost my labour; but reade on, and thou shalt see my love and care of thee and thy saluation is as great as if thou wert a sonne' (8-9). Following her hedging, prefatory justification for writing, Joscelin's posthumous voice, is assertive and insistent (surviving in print as in manuscript in this regard), frequently urging 'I desire', 'I know', 'I am sure'. Leigh is even more so, combining maternal advice, devotional passages and sturdy reformist assertions.

The construction of a posthumous agency is rhetorically powerful, a form of prosopopoeia, in which the self is re-designated with the inarguable quality of a voice from the grave or, to return to Gavin Alexander's lovely phrase, 'the spooky side of prosopopoeia' (2010, 110). This

'spooky', disembodied voice is exactly what is conjured by the self-conscious posthumousness of mother's legacy writing. However, for women, this 'spooky' voice does not only re-animate the dead but further gives voice to the 'dumb' by breaking female silence via a solid rhetorical pathway. During the seventeenth century, once both Leigh and Joscelin were long dead, prosopopoeia remained part of the baptism debate and other mothers' legacies continued to be written. Their own texts were read well into the next century. These relatively youthful women's rhetorical style was out of time and gender: a 'perfect prosopopoeia, remember, should only have been achievably by 'men at years' (Fisher, 1653, 72). Yet both Leigh and Joscelin did more than write from within in the feminine space of motherhood and death, they also threw their voices far beyond.

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