



Women's Writing in Stuart England: The Mothers' Legacies of Dorothy Leigh, Elizabeth Joscelyn, and Elizabeth Richardson

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"It may peradventure ...appear strange to thee to recyve theas lines from a mother that dyed when thou weart born". So writes Elizabeth Joscelyn to her unborn daughter, shortly before dying in childbirth on 12 October, 1622. As a godly woman, Joscelyn was aware of her duty to instruct her child in religion. Prophetically fearing her death, she chose to embody her instruction in a text, a mother's legacy, through which she could (as it were) speak to her child from the dead. In 1624, a Chaplain to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Goad, published Joscelyn's legacy for a wider audience - but with significant changes. This edition reproduces Joscelyn's own manuscript, complete with her authorial revisions as well as notes of Goad's cuts and corrections. The result is a story of textual and cultural negotiations: not merely of Goad editing Joscelyn, but also of Joscelyn editing herself. Joscelyn's legacy is presented with the mothers' legacies of two of her contemporaries: Elizabeth Richardson's "A Ladies Legacie to her Daughters" (1654), reproducing the autograph corrections of a copy presented to the author's brother, and Dorothy Leigh's "The Mothers Blessing" (1616), which may have been the model for the two other works. Together, the three works offer evidence of the ways in which a distinctive genre of early modern women's writing was written and received.

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