

Persistent Widows: Religious Scripts in the Illness Narratives
of Anne Halkett, Ann Fanshawe, and Alice Thornton

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By
Tenyia E. Miller

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OR

Dean
College of Graduate Studies and Research
University of Saskatchewan
107 Administration Place
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Canada

Abstract

In the history of medicine “from below,” religious language has been sidelined as a convention that interfered with the expression of people’s genuine experiences and feelings. This thesis uses the autobiographical writings of three well-known seventeenth-century women, Lady Anne Halkett, Lady Ann Fanshawe, and Alice Thornton, to explore how religious language actually facilitated the expression and preservation of their illness experiences. Having suffered considerable loss during the Civil War and Interregnum, these women relied on familiar religious scripts to present their life stories, including many illness experiences, as persuasive apologies for their difficult situations as widows after the Restoration. Considering their individual expressions of thanksgiving, the good death, and balance within a broader literary context reveals the extent to which each woman not only employed but also adapted convention to suit her particular purpose for writing. The women’s illness narratives must therefore be read with due attention to their religious language, and both need to be interpreted in light of how the women’s particular social situations and writing habits related to the cultural conventions of their time.

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My sincere thanks to these and many others not named here who supported me in the various stages of this project.

In memory of Shantelle Almeida

November 12, 1975 - October 12, 2006

*“And much more it is to bee marvelled that to a Woman hee should
first say...I am the Resurrection”*

Lady Anne Halkett, “Meditation on St. John 11.25”
NLS 6501.11, p. 85

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A Note on the Manuscripts

Thanks to the acquisition of the Perdita Manuscripts digital collection by the Murray Library at the University of Saskatchewan, I was able to base my research on the original manuscripts of Lady Halkett's and Lady Fanshawe's autobiographical writing.¹ All citations from Lady Halkett's *Meditations* and *True Accountt of My Life* and from Lady Fanshawe's *Discourse to My Son* are transcribed from these digital images. Transcriptions retain the original punctuation, contractions (w^{ch} for which, y^t for that, S^r for Sir, etc.), and spelling – with the following exceptions: the use of i for j, u for v, and long s (ſ). These have been modernized in all citations, both manuscript and print, but not in the titles of printed works.

In my text, I have used the women's own titles – or descriptive phrases, where a title is lacking – for their manuscripts. This enables me to distinguish between the original manuscripts and later printed editions, as well as to avoid anachronistic labels such as autobiography or memoir. *Meditations* refers collectively to the fourteen extant manuscript volumes of Lady Halkett's select and occasional meditations; *A True Accountt of My Life* is her own description of the manuscript commonly called her autobiography.² Lady Fanshawe began her untitled manuscript with the phrase, "I have thought it convenient to discourse to you (my most dear and only son)," which I have adapted to *Discourse to My Son*.³ Alice Thornton's *Booke of Remembrances* and *First Booke of My Life* were only available to me in abridged printed editions, but I have still used the manuscript titles in order to discuss each manuscript as a distinct entity.⁴ All citations, however, are identified in the footnotes and bibliography either by

¹ <http://www.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/Perdita.aspx>

² Halkett, NLS 6494.7, p. 294.

³ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 2r. The traditional title is *Memoirs*.

⁴ Elspeth Graham et al., eds., *Her Own Life: Autobiographical Writings by Seventeenth Century Englishwomen* (London: Routledge, 1989), 147; Alice Thornton, *The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton*, ed. Charles Jackson (Durham: Surtees Society, 1875), 271; cf. Raymond A. Anselment, "'My first Booke of my Life:' The Apology of a Seventeenth-Century Gentry Woman," *Prose Studies* 24, no. 2 (2001): 1-3.

library manuscript number (BLA 41161, BLA 32376, NLS 6489, etc.) or by the title of the printed source (*The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, Her Own Life*, etc.). I have used the British Library's pagination for Lady Halkett's *True Accountt* and Lady Fanshawe's *Discourse to My Son*. For Lady Halkett's *Meditations*, I have used the Perdita editors' method of identifying individual meditations by manuscript number, item number, and page number (eg., NLS 6494.7, p. 294). Where there are irregularities in Lady Halkett's page numbering, I have relied on the Perdita site's numbering.

INTRODUCTION

Reading Religious Language in Seventeenth-Century Illness Narratives

Conventional religious expressions are not where the historian typically looks for details of early modern illness experience. Quite the contrary: religious language's unfamiliar logic, formulaic phrases, uneasy relationship with medical intervention, and sometimes baffling transformation of physical experience into spiritual drama all contribute to the sense that religious conventions obscured illness experience. Regardless of how it complicated them, however, religious language cannot be ignored in early modern illness narratives. Using the autobiographical writings of three Royalist widows, Lady Anne Halkett (1622-1699), Lady Ann Fanshawe (1625-1680), and Alice Thornton (1626-1707), this thesis argues that religious language played an integral role in recording and presenting their illness experiences. Each chapter will focus on one of three religious scripts – thanksgiving, the good death, and balance – that the women used as a rhetorical tool, not just in their illness narratives but throughout their writing projects. Their use of these scripts, and thus their portrayal of illness, was shaped to address their particular needs as beleaguered widows in the early decades of the Restoration. In the process of structuring their illness narratives to fit distinct writing projects, religious language made space for and ultimately preserved many stories of physical experience that historians value today.

Religious language has presented an interpretive challenge ever since the interest in individual illness experience began. When the history of medicine “from below” was launched in the early 1980s, it inherited from social history a technique of reading past the rhetoric of religious sources for their evidence.¹ Influential studies published in the previous decade, such

¹ Roy Porter issued the formal call for a history of medicine “from below” in 1985, but several important studies had already been published at that point, such as Patricia Crawford, “Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth-Century

as Alan Macfarlane's *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin* and Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms*, had demonstrated the fascinating potential of reading hitherto neglected sources "against the grain" for new insights into early modern mental worlds.² To all appearances, this approach suited the study of early modern illness experience as well. Religious language seemed to mask the real state of affairs. It was already commonplace to assume that religion's pre-eminence obstructed the advance of medicine.³ The study of individual sufferers' experiences showed that even at a personal level religious beliefs could be difficult to reconcile with reality.⁴

Despite the recent transition from social to cultural in the history of medicine, little has changed in the treatment of religious language. The "providential view of illness" outlined by

England," *Past and Present* 91 (1981): 47-73; and Michael MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam: Madness, Anxiety, and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981); cf. Roy Porter, "The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from Below," *Theory and Society* 14, no. 2 (1985): 175-198.

² Alan Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin, a Seventeenth-Century Clergyman: An Essay in Historical Anthropology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970; reprint, New York: Norton, 1977), ch. 1; Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), xvii-xx (originally published in 1976). Reading "against the grain" is characteristic of history "from below": see Jim Sharpe, "History from Below," in *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, ed. Peter Burke, 2nd ed. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), esp. 30-32. On reading past the conventional religious language in personal writings, see also Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington's World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1985), 183-187; and Sara Heller Mendelson, *The Mental World of Stuart Women: Three Studies* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 80-110.

³ Macfarlane, *Josselin*, 170-173; Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971; reprint, Penguin Books, 1991), 95-103; J. Sears McGee, *The Godly Man in Stuart England: Anglicans, Puritans, and the Two Tables, 1620-1670* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 17-18, 36, 41; Claudine Herzlich and Janine Pierret, *Illness and Self in Society*, trans. Elborg Forster (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 11-19. This idea still influences perspectives on the early modern deathbed: Roy Porter and Dorothy Porter, *In Sickness and in Health: The British Experience, 1650-1850* (London: Fourth Estate, 1988), 248, 255; Ralph A. Houlbrooke, "The Puritan Death-bed, c. 1560-c. 1660," in *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700*, ed. Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 144; Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion, and the Family in England, 1480-1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 204.

⁴ Macfarlane, *Josselin*, ch. 11; Andrew Wear, "Puritan Perceptions of Illness in Seventeenth Century England," in *Patients and Practitioners: Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-Industrial Society*, ed. Roy Porter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 55-99; Lucinda McCray Beier, *Sufferers and Healers: The Experience of Illness in Seventeenth-Century England* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987), ch. 6 & 7; Porter and Porter, *Sickness and Health*, ch. 7 & 10; David Harley, "The Theology of Affliction and the Experience of Sickness in the Godly Family, 1650-1714: The Henrys and the Newcomes," in *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth Century England*, ed. Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (Brookfield, VT: Scolar Press, 1996), 273-292.

several early studies continues to be the primary interpretive framework.⁵ According to this view, sickness was one of the ways God communicated with humankind and therefore required careful scrutiny. God might send sickness to punish sin and provoke repentance, or to test and strengthen a believer's spiritual resolve; sufferers needed to respond appropriately.⁶ Historians have attempted to identify sectarian variations within this view, and have compared it extensively with other approaches to illness, such as medicine, magic, or self-treatment.⁷ These efforts to establish boundaries have had the opposite effect, however, by showing that the providential view of illness was extremely broad and could accommodate a myriad individual variations. On its own, the doctrine of providence is too general to account for the variety of ways in which early modern sufferers used religious language.

The literary dimension of religious language needs more attention; it has been overlooked in the effort to establish the more practical effects of providential beliefs on illness experience.⁸ As work on modern illness narratives has made clear, the rhetorical effect of language is a key aspect of illness narratives. In a modern context, illness narratives have been defined as the stories individuals construct to make sense of their experience.⁹ In contrast to professional

⁵ Wear, "Puritan Perceptions," 70 and *passim*; Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*; Porter and Porter, *Sickness and Health*. Compare to Andrew Wear, "Religious Beliefs and Medicine in Early Modern England," in *The Task of Healing: Medicine, Religion, and Gender in England and the Netherlands, 1450-1800*, ed. Hilary Marland and Margaret Pelling (Rotterdam: Erasmus Publishing, 1996), 145-169; Harley, "Theology of Affliction"; and note how the "providential view" has been absorbed into literary studies such as Raymond A. Anselment, *The Realms of Apollo: Literature and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995).

⁶ Macfarlane, *Josselin*, 170-182; Thomas, *Religion and Decline*, 98-103; Jonathan Goldberg, "The Understanding of Sickness in Donne's Devotions," *Renaissance Quarterly* 24, no. 4 (1971): 507-517; McGee, *Godly Man*, 13-67; Wear, "Puritan Perceptions," 70-78; David Harley, "Medical Metaphors in English Moral Theology, 1560-1660," *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences* 48 (1993): 396-435; Harley, "Theology of Affliction"; Anselment, *Realms of Apollo*, 25-30.

⁷ Macfarlane, *Josselin*, 170-173; Thomas, *Religion and Decline*, 9-17, 98-103, 179, 209-251; Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, 154-181; Porter and Porter, *Sickness and Health*, 116-132, 166-184; Wear, "Puritan Perceptions"; Wear, "Beliefs and Medicine."

⁸ Contrast Goldberg, "Understanding of Sickness" with later studies such as Wear, "Puritan Perceptions"; or Harley, "Theology of Affliction." Goldberg is interested in the literary portrayal of illness experience, while Wear and Harley prioritize illness experience itself.

⁹ Arthur Kleinman, *The Illness Narratives: Suffering, Healing, and the Human Condition* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 49-51; Howard Brody, *Stories of Sickness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 5-6; David B. Morris,

medical explanations that focus on a physiological process, sufferers incorporate their illnesses more broadly within their life stories and social contexts. They do this to help themselves cope and to establish meaningful interactions with those around them. Illness narratives therefore both create and contest meaning, relying on culturally-rooted discourses to do so.¹⁰

The use of religious language in early modern illness narratives also needs to be interpreted as part of a persuasive endeavour, and not just in terms of its doctrinal definition. Considering patterns of religious language in terms of cultural scripts – widely accepted patterns of thought and expression – is an effective method of combining formal meaning with the many other nuances an expression could convey.¹¹ A script provides a pattern for behaviour and makes it intelligible; but it is still flexible, since there are so many different ways to evoke shared assumptions. Because a script is familiar throughout a culture, a slight reference can imply a great deal. The concept of scripts is well-suited to the study of early modern women's use of religious language, where constraint and opportunity were inseparable.¹² The strategic use of

The Culture of Pain (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 18-19, 26, 29. For the application of these definitions to early modern illness narratives, see Mary E. Fissell, *Patients, Power, and the Poor in Eighteenth-Century Bristol* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 33-36; Helen King, *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (London: Routledge, 1998), ch. 6; David Gentilcore, *Healers and Healing in Early Modern Italy* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), ch. 7.

¹⁰ Mary E. Fissell, "Making Meaning from the Margins: The New Cultural History of Medicine," in *Locating Medical History: The Stories and their Meanings* (London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), 364-389; G. S. Rousseau, "Introduction," in *Framing and Imagining Disease in Cultural History*, ed. G. S. Rousseau (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 1-19; David Harley, "Rhetoric and the Social Construction of Sickness and Healing," *Social History of Medicine* 12, no. 3 (1999): 407-435.

¹¹ Helpful discussions of the term "script" can be found in Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitnesses: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2006), 326-347; Jerry Camery-Hoggatt, *Reading the Good Book Well: A Guide to Biblical Interpretation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007), 108-111. A number of early modern studies use the term "script," but without defining it: Houlbrooke, "Puritan Death-bed," 142; Colin Jones, "Plague and Its Metaphors in Early Modern France," *Representations* 53 (Winter): 106-112; Sidonie Smith, *A Poetics of Women's Autobiography: Marginality and the Fictions of Self-Representation* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 31-39; Donna J. Long, "Maternal Elegies by Mary Carey, Lucy Hastings, Alice Thornton and Gertrude Thimelby," in *Speaking Grief in English Literary Culture: Shakespeare to Milton*, ed. Margo Swiss and David A. Kent (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 2002), 159.

¹² Diane Willen, "Women and Religion in Early Modern England," in *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe: Public and Private Worlds*, ed. Sherrin Marshall (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 140-165; Patricia Crawford, *Women and Religion in England, 1500-1720* (London: Routledge, 1993), ch. 4; Suzanne Trill, "Religion and the Construction of Femininity," in *Women and Literature in Britain, 1500-1700*, ed.

language that was both appropriate and persuasive was central to early modern women's writing. Traditionally, the women's life narratives considered here have been read within the theoretical framework of autobiography, a genre that was not defined till the eighteenth century.¹³ They are better understood, however, as apologies – not in the sense of admitting to wrongdoing, but as “an assertion of personal integrity, with a view to vindicating the author's public reputation.”¹⁴

Persuasion is at the core of these women's writing projects, essential to their theme of unmerited loss. On the surface, their stories are about loyal sacrifices for King and Church during the Civil War (1642-1649) and the Interregnum (1649-1659). Because the women were born within four years of each other, between 1622 and 1626, into families with court connections, their experiences during the turbulent mid-century were much the same. While the Royalist cause suffered at large – military defeat, the proscription of the *Book of Common Prayer*, and the execution of Charles I – the women and their families suffered on a smaller but parallel scale. Key family members died, parliament confiscated estates, and enemy soldiers constantly threatened. Repeatedly, the women survived by their own wits in the absence of their menfolk. In the midst of this turmoil, illness was yet another category of misfortune that had to be endured. Whether illness ended in deliverance or death, it heightened the sense of what the women and their families had suffered “upon so righteous a cause.”¹⁵ After Charles II's return to the throne in 1660, the women continued to mourn for what was lost, even though they were

Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 30-55; Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing, 1646-1688* (London: Virago Press, 1988), 1-25.

¹³ On the problems of the label “autobiography,” see Robert Folkenflik, “Introduction: The Institution of Autobiography,” in *The Culture of Autobiography: Constructions of Self-Representation*, ed. Robert Folkenflik (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), 1-20; Linda H. Peterson, “Institutionalizing Women's Autobiography: Nineteenth-Century Editors and the Shaping of an Autobiographical Tradition,” in *Ibid.*, 80-103; cf. Sheila Ottway, “Autobiography,” in *A Companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. Anita Pacheco (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 231-247.

¹⁴ Sheila Ottway, “They Only Lived Twice: Public and Private Selfhood in the Autobiographies of Anne, Lady Halkett and Colonel Joseph Bampfield,” in *Betraying Our Selves: Forms of Self-Representation in Early Modern English Texts*, ed. Henk Dragstra, Sheila Ottway, and Helen Wilcox (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 142; cf. Graham et al., *Her Own Life*, 24-25.

¹⁵ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 15v.

technically on the winning side. The restoration of king and church could not erase the previous two decades, and it did little to repair many Royalists' decimated families and fortunes.¹⁶ The hint of disappointment in the restoration regime is unmistakable in all three narratives, despite the women's conservative stance.

Beneath the women's stories of loyal sacrifice were more urgent complaints about the degradation of widowhood. It so happened that the women also lost their husbands within a four-year period, between 1666 and 1670, during the first decade of the Restoration.

Widowhood brought debts, dependent children, and weakened credit networks, situations in which the women felt more acutely than ever the erosion of the comfortable status into which they had been born.¹⁷ How the women's situations in widowhood contributed to their writing is not completely clear from their autobiographical narratives, and consequently has not been studied as much as their wartime experiences. It was widowhood pressures, however, that made it expedient to write defensive life narratives, and these pressures therefore had a key influence on the women's selection and portrayal of illness experience.

Each woman responded to her own particular situation with a different type of writing. Lady Fanshawe's "discourse" to her son "of your family, as well as...of your Father and my life" was written for her only surviving son.¹⁸ She explained that her purpose was to instruct her son

¹⁶ Ronald Hutton, *The Restoration: A Political and Religious History of England and Wales, 1658-1667* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 136-138, 142.

¹⁷ On the difficulties of widowhood, see Sara Heller Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England, 1550-1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 174-183; Barbara J. Todd, "The Remarrying Widow: A Stereotype Reconsidered," in *Women in English Society, 1500-1800*, ed. Mary Prior (London: Methuen, 1985), 54-92; Sarah Ross, "'And Trophes of his praises make': Providence and Poetry in Katherine Austen's *Book M*, 1664-1668," in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 181-204; Amy Louise Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1993), esp. ch. 2.

¹⁸ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 2r. The manuscript is referred to hereafter as *Discourse to My Son* (or *Discourse*). Mothers' literary legacies were common, but fathers also wrote instructions to their children. See Sylvia Brown, ed., *Women's Writing in Stuart England: The Mothers' Legacies of Dorothy Leigh, Elizabeth Joscelin, and Elizabeth Richardson* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999). Compare similar writings by Alice Thornton's father and by Lady Halkett: Christopher Wandesforde, *A Book of Instructions, Written by the Right Honourable Sir Christr. Wandesforde, Knt.*

by presenting her husband, Sir Richard Fanshawe, and the other “honest worthy vertuous men and women who served God in their generations” in the Fanshawe family as examples for him to emulate.¹⁹ Besides its ostensible purpose as an instructive family history, the *Discourse* also preserved Lady Fanshawe’s complaint that neither her husband nor his family had been properly appreciated or rewarded by Charles II for their life-long loyalty. In effect, the *Discourse* ensured that her voice would be heard alongside the many other portraits of Sir Richard available to his son.²⁰ The manuscript of the *Discourse* in the British Library was transcribed by an amanuensis in May 1676 and then edited and augmented by Lady Fanshawe before her death in 1680. It is clearly incomplete, perhaps one of a series of drafts in a project that was never finished.²¹

Because the beginning and end of Lady Halkett’s *True Accountt of My Life* are lost, the manuscript appears to concentrate on the twelve years prior to her marriage.²² As a consequence, most readers have focused on Lady Halkett’s novelistic skills and “romantic” adventures, such as four real or rumoured love affairs, assisting in the Duke of York’s escape to

Lord Deputy of Ireland, First Master of the Rolls, then One of the Lords Justices, and Baron Mowbray & Musters; to His Son and Heir, George Wandesforde, Esq., in order to the Regulating the Conduct of His Whole Life. (Cambridge: J. Archdeacon, 1777); Anne Halkett, *Instructions for Youth. Written by the Lady Halket, for the Use of those young Noblemen and Gentlemen, whose Education was committed to her Care* (Edinburgh: Mr. Andrew Symson, 1701). Lady Halkett also wrote two manuscript instructions for children, one before the birth of her first child (NLS 6489.9.1, p. 198-256) and one for her only surviving son in widowhood (NLS 6492.42, p. 244-308).

¹⁹ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 9v.

²⁰ Besides his funeral sermon, consider Sir Richard’s manuscript account of his imprisonment and parole during the Interregnum (mentioned by Lady Fanshawe but not extant) and the posthumous publication of his diplomatic correspondence, *Original letters of his Excellency Sir Richard Fanshaw, during his embassies in Spain and Portugal* (London: Printed for Abel Roper, 1701). He had also published a number of poetic translations during his lifetime. In addition to all these writings, his son would have possessed several painted portraits of his father. See Peter Davidson, “Fanshawe, Sir Richard, first baronet (1608–1666),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9149>.

²¹ Her medicine book shows similar plans for revision (Ann Fanshawe, “Lady Ann Fanshawe’s book of cookery and medical receipts”, begun 1651, Wellcome Library for the History and Understanding of Medicine). John Loftis points out that the amanuensis copied one page out of order, indicating that the manuscript was copied, not dictated: *The Memoirs of Anne, Lady Halkett and Ann, Lady Fanshawe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 91. Loftis’s is the most recent printed edition; another important edition was published by H. C. Fanshawe in 1907. Previous editions were published in 1829, 1830, and 1905.

²² The *Perdita Manuscripts* digital collection gives a thorough description of the damages, and guesses from the darkened first and last pages that the manuscript was originally stored unbound. “Note” on Anne Halkett’s Autobiography, *Perdita Manuscripts* (<http://www.amdigital.co.uk/Collections/Perdita.aspx>).

Holland in 1648, and treating soldiers when they were wounded or facing them down when they were defiant. The rediscovery of fourteen manuscript volumes of Lady Halkett's *Meditations* has shifted attention to her apologetic concerns.²³ A meditation in one of these volumes clarifies that Lady Halkett wrote "a True accountt of my life" between September 1677 and April 1678 in response to "Seveare Censare" from unidentified people.²⁴ The remaining lines of the preface to her *True Accountt* assert that "Christ the righteous...will plead for mee wherin I am inocentt and pardon wherin I have beene guilty."²⁵ This, and her regular use of the phrase "I Confese" to introduce admissions of guilt or weakness, suggest that her writing was framed as a confession.²⁶ Still, "Seveare Censare" was a phrase that Lady Halkett used for a variety of circumstances, which makes it difficult to pinpoint exactly what provoked her to write.²⁷ Her unfortunate engagement to an already-married man is a key concern in the surviving portion of her *True Accountt*, but her *Meditations* reveal other pressing concerns, such as debts, supporting her only surviving son, and friction with her Presbyterian neighbours.²⁸

Alice Thornton's writings are more difficult to classify. She wrote multiple

²³ Margaret Ezell reintroduced Lady Halkett's meditations in her essay, "Ann Halkett's Morning Devotions: Posthumous Publication and the Culture of Writing in Late Seventeenth-Century Britain," in *Print, Manuscript, and Performance: The Changing Relations of the Media in Early Modern England* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2000), 215-231. On how the meditations alter readings of Lady Halkett's *True Accountt*, see Suzanne Trill, "Lady Anne Halkett," *The Literary Encyclopedia* (The Literary Dictionary Company, 2004), <https://www.litencyc.com/php/speople.php?rec=true&UID=1938>; and "Meditations," *Ibid.* (2007), <https://www.litencyc.com/php/sworks.php?rec=true&UID=20421>; Suzanne Trill, ed., *Lady Anne Halkett: Selected Self-Writings* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), xvii-xxxix; Susan Wiseman, *Conspiracy and Virtue: Women, Writing, and Politics in Seventeenth Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 319-333. Portions of Lady Halkett's meditations were published posthumously in 1701 and 1702 by her minister, Simon Cooper, along with a biography and a catalogue of her manuscripts. None of the published meditations are extant in manuscript. A selection of the manuscript meditations appears in Trill's *Lady Halkett: Self-Writings*.

²⁴ Halkett, BLA 32376, hereafter *True Accountt of My Life* (or *True Accountt*); Halkett, NLS 6494.7, p. 291, 294. The manuscript was first printed by the Camden Society in 1875; more recent versions include Loftis, *Memoirs*; and Trill, *Lady Halkett: Self-Writings*.

²⁵ Halkett, BLA 32376, 1r, 2v.

²⁶ "I confese": see *Ibid.*, 2v, 3v, 5r, 16r, 20r, 21r. Cf. Judith Kearns, "Fashioning Innocence: Rhetorical Construction of Character in the *Memoirs* of Anne, Lady Halkett," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 46, no. 3 (2004): 341, 345, 353; Wiseman, *Conspiracy and Virtue*, 325-326.

²⁷ Halkett, BLA 32376, 19r, 50r; NLS 6493.29, p. 275; NLS 6495.3, p. iii.

²⁸ See Trill, *Lady Halkett: Self-Writings*, xvii-xxxix.

autobiographical narratives both before and during widowhood, but none has been printed in full and the originals are either lost or privately owned.²⁹ The main printed version is the Surtees edition of 1875, a collection of excerpts based primarily on the second of the four manuscripts, Alice's *First Booke of My Life*.³⁰ The *First Booke* employed an informal meditative pattern to record "my course of Life, what God had don for me...wth obseruations of mercys, deliurances, & thanksgivings therevppon."³¹ However, excerpts in the Surtees edition from the last two manuscripts describe how Alice used this ostensibly devotional writing to defend herself in widowhood, as a response to a series of situations in which her virtue, prudence, and family claims were questioned.³² One of Alice's stories mentions that she began the *First Booke* in 1669, five months after the death of her husband, William Thornton.³³ Other stories refer to the circulation of an earlier version of the *First Booke* among several of Alice's female relatives, within a month of her husband's death in 1668.³⁴ Alice continued to write and revise her manuscripts throughout her long widowhood.

Noting the genre of writing being used in each of these manuscripts, whether family history, confession, or meditation, is important because the use of religious language and the portrayal of illness experience was fitted to it.³⁵ Alice Thornton's construction of her life

²⁹ On the different manuscripts, see Thornton, *Autobiography*, xiv-xv; Anselment, "Apology," 1-3, 13-14 nt. 1 & 2; Raymond A. Anselment, "Seventeenth-Century Manuscript Sources of Alice Thornton's Life," *Studies in English Literature* 45, no. 1 (2005): 135-137, 154 nt. 6, 7 & 9. Besides the Surtees edition, which is based on three of the manuscripts, excerpts from a fourth, the *Booke of Remembrances*, are printed in Graham et al., *Her Own Life*, 147-164.

³⁰ For the title of the manuscript, see Thornton, *Autobiography*, 271. On the editing of the Surtees edition, see Ibid., xv; Anselment, "Manuscript Sources."

³¹ Cited in Anselment, "Manuscript Sources," 136 (omitted from Surtees edition).

³² Thornton, *Autobiography*, 259; 222-224, 235-238; cf. Anselment, "Apology"; "Manuscript Sources."

³³ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 271, 273; cf. Anselment, "Apology," 2; "Manuscript Sources," 136.

³⁴ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 258-260. I differ from most scholars in assuming that Alice circulated an earlier version of the *First Booke*, rather than writing the *First Booke* for the express purpose of circulation. (Anselment considers the possibility in his footnotes: "Apology," 14 nt. 5; "Manuscript Sources," 154 nt. 7.) As I will argue in Chapter 1, Alice had no time to write a new manuscript immediately after her husband's death.

³⁵ Seventeenth-century genres of writing tend to be viewed as a constraint on self-expression: see Graham et al., *Her Own Life*, 20-22; David Booy, ed., *Personal Disclosures: An Anthology of Self-Writings from the Seventeenth*

narrative as a series of meditations made it possible to include detailed illness narratives and extensive passages of religious response. By contrast, Lady Fanshawe presented her illness narratives as brief anecdotes suitable to the conversational style of a family discourse. Lady Halkett's illness narratives and religious language are disarmingly frank, appropriate to the confessional tone of her narrative. Reading the women's life narratives in the context of their other writing confirms that purpose and genre for writing shaped the use of religious language and illness narratives. All three women wrote extensively throughout their lifetimes, and their writings display a variety of attitudes toward illness. Lady Fanshawe's medicine book and letters to her husband reveal her active concern for the family's health, something that is largely invisible in her *Discourse to My Son*.³⁶ Lady Halkett's *Meditations* couple illness experience and self-examination in a manner unlike her *True Accountt*, but resembling Alice Thornton's illness narratives instead – which also suggests that Alice Thornton's presentation of illness experience was influenced by the devotional genre she was using.

How the women used religious language in their illness narratives reflected their familiarity with contemporary devotional practice. Though their writings only give brief glimpses of their reading habits, all three women were obviously well-read. Besides frequent biblical allusions and paraphrases, they also used the formal styles of religious discourse common in devotional manuals. As staunch conformists to the Church of England, they would have relied on the *Book of Common Prayer* even while its public use was prohibited between

Century (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 3-6 ; see also the reactions to Alice Thornton's writing style discussed in Chapter 1. As a result, studies of women's autobiographical writing have emphasized the diversity of genres women used, rather than one primary type of writing. See for example Elspeth Graham, "Women's Writing and the Self," in *Women and Literature*, 212-213; Sharon Cadman Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender in Early Modern Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 2-3, 6-8, and ch. 4 & 5.

³⁶ Fanshawe, "Receipt book"; Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Report on the Manuscripts of J. M. Heathcote, Esq., of Conington Castle* (Norwich: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1899), 224-240.

1645 and 1660.³⁷ Other important conformist works of the seventeenth century that I have used in the following chapters to contextualize the women's religious language include several of Bishop Joseph Hall's (1574-1656) works on meditation and devotional practice, and Bishop Jeremy Taylor's (1613-1667) *Holy Living* and *Holy Dying*. Bishop Hall undoubtedly influenced at least two of the women.³⁸ Jeremy Taylor's books, along with John Beadle's and Isaac Ambrose's writings on the duty of thanksgiving, are later works and can only be regarded as parallel expressions of a common devotional practice.³⁹

The first chapter considers the script of thanksgiving and how it made space for the women's illness narratives. In early modern studies, thanksgiving has been lost in the general discussion of providence, punishment and deliverance. However, thanksgiving was an important religious exercise in the seventeenth century, not just in response to deliverance but also on other occasions. Due to its repetition in public and private worship, formal thanksgiving was widely familiar and thus a literary form that was accessible to lay writers. Using these women's childbirth thanksgivings, the chapter demonstrates that although the conventions of formal thanksgiving left little room for illness details, the women could arrange its elements to reflect their particular experiences. The script of thanksgiving thus provided both an occasion and a shape for early versions of illness narratives, an important insight into Alice Thornton's use of thanksgiving language. Alice has been criticized for using religious rhetoric that contradicted

³⁷ Isabel Rivers, "Prayer-book Devotion: The Literature of the Proscribed Episcopal Church," in *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English Revolution*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 198-214; John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 14-20; Judith D. Maltby, *Prayer Book and People in Elizabethan and Early Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 24-30.

³⁸ Besides his role in popularizing devotional meditation, Hall is cited by both Lady Halkett and Alice Thornton. See Halkett, NLS 6492.20, p. 58-63; Anselment, "Manuscript Sources," 154 nt. 7.

³⁹ Beadle and Ambrose are the most frequently cited sources on the duty of thanksgiving, though neither was a conformist (both ministers were ejected in 1662). Devotional practice was more of a common ground than sectarian labels suggest. See Spurr, *Restoration Church*, 22-23; Maltby, *Prayer Book and People*, 1-2; Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1954), 4-13; Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 147-148.

her story of suffering and loss. On the contrary, the script of thanksgiving enabled her first to record her story and then, in the crisis following her husband's death, to circulate and rewrite it in her defense.

The second chapter examines a more familiar script, the good death, and its reputation for enforced artificiality. Scholars question the historical reliability of good death narratives because it was conventional in the seventeenth century to present the best possible final image of the deceased. The chapter argues that despite the literary crafting, or fiction, involved in good death narratives, they are not any more unreliable than other illness narratives. The selective use of good death narratives in these women's writings shows that, in personal writings, the script was not mandatory. In fact, as with thanksgiving, the script shaped illness narratives in a positive way, creating space and providing structure for a record of individual experience. The women's own purposes for writing had more influence than public convention on how they used the good death script, as Lady Halkett's *True Accountt of My Life* illustrates well. She appropriated the good deaths of friends as models and foils for her own near-death experiences, in order to convey indirect political and religious messages in a potentially public defense of her character.

The final chapter discusses the script of balance, or moderation. Unlike thanksgiving or the good death, this script was not exclusively religious. It linked religious, philosophical and medical expressions by means of a common conception of balance and movement derived from humoral theory. The chapter focuses on the script's religious aspect, which has been neglected in scholarly discussions of the early modern mind-body connection. Where modern readers assume a distinction between physical experience and its spiritual interpretation, these women understood a fluid interchange among emotional, physical and spiritual aspects of a single coherent experience. Thus, as two of Lady Halkett's meditations on near-death illness

experiences demonstrate, the devil's temptations were as much part of her experience as fear and pain, making it impossible to isolate a physical experience in either illness narrative. Lady Fanshawe's *Discourse to My Son* provides a broader example of how the script of balance connected apparently contradictory elements, this time for a rhetorical purpose. The alternation between emotional reserve and excess in the *Discourse*, a feature of Lady Fanshawe's illness narratives which has perplexed her readers, results from her strategic use of the script of balance to combine instruction and pathos.

These chapters draw three different areas of scholarship on the early modern period into a fruitful conversation. Framing the discussion in terms of illness narratives starts the conversation within the history of medicine "from below." Focusing on the illness narratives in early modern women's autobiographical writings, however, introduces the complexities of women's writing in general, and apologetic writing in particular – factors that shaped the composition of illness narratives and the use of religious language. Tracing the persuasive intent of these women's writings draws in a third conversation partner, seventeenth-century literary conventions. Since the history of medicine deals in mostly informal sources, and the history of women's writing has developed out of a resistance to exclusive definitions of literature, the literary history of the seventeenth century makes an unusual addition. Nevertheless, it is the combination of these research angles that enables a fresh analysis of these women's writing. An integrated approach reclaims evidence that each area of scholarship, on its own, would dismiss as either too complex, too familiar, or too informal. It makes possible a new appreciation of these women's literary skill and their persistence in the midst of loss.

CHAPTER ONE

“Expresing of my humble gratitude”: The Script of Thanksgiving

Alice Thornton’s “greatt sickness at Oswoldkirke” in early 1662 has gone unnoticed among her many better-known illness narratives due to the haphazard editing of the Surtees edition.¹ Only two fragments of the story are included: one details the progress of Alice’s illness from a cold taken at church, to vomiting, fever, and almost death; the other jumps ahead to a passage of thanksgiving after her recovery. The large gap in the story, coupled with its being misdated by a year, makes its connection to Alice’s larger narrative unclear.² But the Surtees edition does include, in a small footnote, Alice’s cross-reference to “a whole paper booke upon this great deliverance of my soule, and in expresing of my humble gratitude” that she wrote on her recovery.³ This was a common type of devotional writing, known as occasional or extemporal meditation.⁴ Alice evidently relied on it when she rewrote the story in her later manuscripts, which is interesting given the modern reaction to her thanksgiving language.⁵ Did thanksgiving really hinder or problematize Alice’s expression of suffering, as various scholars have argued?

The “paper booke,” though it only survives in a footnote, encourages a closer examination of the conventions of thanksgiving that influenced Alice’s writing. Early modern

¹ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 132-133.

² Missing details are supplied in Anselment, “Manuscript Sources,” 140-141. Anselment does not comment on the problem with the date, but the connection he establishes to Alice’s seventh pregnancy indicates that “Feb. 13th, 1661” should have been printed as a split date (1661/2).

³ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 133 nt.

⁴ Joseph Hall, *The Arte of Divine Meditation* (London: Humfrey Lownes, for Samuel Macham, and Mathew Cooke, 1606), 10-16; Isaac Ambrose, *The Compleat Works of that Eminent Minister of GODS Word Mr. Isaac Ambrose* (London: Rowland Reynolds, 1674), 182-184; cf. Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 150-152.

⁵ Graham et al., *Her Own Life*, 148-149; Mary Beth Rose, *Gender and Heroism in Early Modern English Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 70-77; (an earlier version was published as “Gender, Genre, and History: Seventeenth-Century English Women and the Art of Autobiography,” in *Women in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Literary and Historical Perspectives* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986), 259-267); Raymond A. Anselment, “The Deliverances of Alice Thornton: The Re-creation of a Seventeenth-Century Life,” *Prose Studies* 19, no. 1 (1996): 19-36; Anne Lear, “Thank God for Haemorrhoids! Illness and Identity in a Seventeenth-Century Woman’s Autobiography,” *Women’s Writing* 12, no. 3 (2005): 337-345.

thanksgiving language is surprisingly little studied, perhaps because it is so common that the complexity of its logic and structure has been overlooked. Beneath the apparent simplicity of the language lies an extensive cultural script that strongly influenced personal writing habits. Giving thanks for God's blessings fulfilled an essential religious duty. The exercise was well-suited to autobiographical writing, not only because it required repetition and an audience, but also because the routines of public and private worship made its formal literary patterns widely familiar. Alice's writings are ideal for the study of thanksgiving because the script was so deeply ingrained into every stage of her project, starting with essentially private devotional writing like her "paper booke" and continuing beyond to the public apology of widowhood and to posthumous piety. In a sense, thanksgiving made Alice's writing possible. For her illness narratives more specifically, the script of thanksgiving created important space by giving them a structure, preserving details, and, when necessary, legitimating publication.

In early modern studies, the script of thanksgiving has been taken for granted as scholars focus more narrowly on ways that the rhetoric of providential deliverance was used. A providential deliverance was a significant misfortune averted or reversed, which signalled God's favour toward an individual or a community, and thanksgiving was the proper response to it.⁶ The flexibility of deliverance rhetoric, especially its capacity to carry a variety of meanings, has intrigued scholars. Studies of illness experience have shown that thanksgiving for recovery was used not only by the godly but also by those less concerned about its religious application.⁷

Women writers found the rhetoric of deliverance an effective mode of self-presentation because

⁶ Halkett, BLA 32376, 51v; Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 17r, 40v; Thornton, *Autobiography*, 3-5. Primary sources illustrate this best because scholarly discussions of providence focus on judgments more than deliverances: for example, Thomas, *Religion and Decline*, 90-132; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 15. But see the discussion in Sharon Howard, "Imagining the Pain and Peril of Seventeenth-Century Childbirth: Travail and Deliverance in the Making of an Early Modern World," *Social History of Medicine* 16, no. 3 (2003): 378-379.

⁷ Harley, "Theology of Affliction," 274, 278; Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, 154; Wear, "Puritan Perceptions," 76; Porter and Porter, *Sickness and Health*, 170-174; Anselment, *Realms of Apollo*, 26.

it was appropriate and yet accommodated their particular stories.⁸ When more than one group was involved, the rhetoric's flexibility could also generate conflict. On public occasions for thanksgiving such as national holidays or the churching of women after childbirth, expressions of providential deliverance became the site of intense competition over the occasion's meaning.⁹

Scholarly criticism of Alice Thornton's writing raises questions about the flexibility of deliverance rhetoric and the simplicity of thanksgiving as a concept. Like many other women, Alice used the rhetoric of deliverance to write her life story, but her modern readers are almost unanimous that it did not work in her case.¹⁰ They suggest that although she used the script as prescribed, she subverted it in the effort to make her real experience of suffering, loss and resentment known.¹¹ Two readers have singled out Alice's use of thanksgiving, in particular, as the root of this tension between story and rhetoric. Anne Lear includes thanksgiving within the "public language of her religion" that Alice undermined in her more candid moments of self-assertion.¹² Raymond Anselment sees the same effect happening due to an awkward shift in emphasis from praise to self-defense over the course of Alice's writing, which he attributes to her attempted synthesis of incompatible writing genres.¹³ Together, Lear and Anselment express

⁸ Rose, *Gender and Heroism*, 68-72; Anselment, "Deliverances"; Howard, "Imagining Pain"; Ross, "Providence and Poetry."

⁹ On holidays, see David Cressy, "The Protestant Calendar and the Vocabulary of Celebration in Early Modern England," *The Journal of British Studies* 29, no. 1 (1990): 31-52; David Cressy, "National Memory in Early Modern England," in *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity*, ed. John R. Gillis (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 61-73; cf. David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989). On the churching of women: David Cressy, "Purification, Thanksgiving and the Churching of Women in Post-Reformation England," *Past and Present* 141 (1993): 106-146; Linda A. Pollock, "Childbearing and Female Bonding in Early Modern England," *Social History* 22, no. 3 (1997): 287-306; Thomas, *Religion and Decline*, 42-43, 68-69; Jacqueline Eales, *Women in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (London: UCL Press, 1998), 70-71.

¹⁰ The key exception is Howard, "Imagining Pain."

¹¹ Rose, *Gender and Heroism*, 73; Anselment, "Deliverances," 20-24, 33-34. The "submerged story" in Alice's writing is often read as one of resentment – toward her husband and marriage, toward her mother, or even toward God. Compare Rose, *Gender and Heroism*, 73-77; Margaret George, *Women in the First Capitalist Society: Experiences in Seventeenth-Century England* (Urbana & Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 168-179; Lear, "Illness and Identity," 343.

¹² Lear, "Illness and Identity," 342; cf. 339, 343-344.

¹³ "Deliverances," 19-22, 24, 33-34; "Apology," 3; "Manuscript Sources," 141-142, 146-153.

two basic objections to Alice's use of thanksgiving: first, that thanksgiving contradicts a story of suffering, and second, that thanksgiving is incompatible with self-defense.

These evaluations are a reaction to complexities in the script of thanksgiving that need to be explored before making an assessment of how effectively Alice used it. Lear and Anselment usefully identify a compulsive element in thanksgiving and detect a relationship between the language and Alice's more formal, devotional passages. But a thorough exploration of the conventions of thanksgiving is still lacking. Alice's use of thanksgiving should be studied comparatively, both in light of the rationale and models she was using and alongside other women's use of those same guidelines. Read in this broader context, the pressure and formality of the script of thanksgiving prove to be less detrimental to Alice's story. The script was integral to her illness narratives, and it enabled her to present her writing in a light that suited her defensive purpose.

The script of thanksgiving

When compared to Lady Fanshawe's or Lady Halkett's use of thanksgiving, Alice Thornton's language initially seems exceptional. The differences in style and quantity are immediately noticeable. Lady Fanshawe peppered her writing with short, habitual expressions such as "God be prayed" or "I thank God" and rarely expanded on them. Lady Halkett used phrases such as "I blese God" more sparingly, preferring to imply her gratitude rather than verbalize it. Alice, unlike the others, regularly interrupted her narrative with lengthy, formal passages of thanksgiving. Especially in the first half of the Surtees edition, such passages appear at the introduction and conclusion of most events, creating a literary effect that is cumbersome by modern standards. The effect would have been different, however, in the seventeenth century. The language resembles prayer or meditation, familiar styles of devotional writing

which Alice could expect to elicit a certain response from her readers. The first step toward interpreting her distinctive use of thanksgiving, then, is to establish what she and her contemporaries assumed about it.

In the preface to her *First Booke of My Life*, Alice explained that her writing was motivated by

the dutie of every true Christian to remember and take notice of Almighty God our Heavenly Father's gracious acts of Providence over them, and mercifull dealings with them, even from the wombe, untill the grave burie them in silence, as also to keepe perticuler remembrances of His favours, both spirituall and temporall, together with his remarkable deliverances of their soules and bodies, with a true and unfeined gratitude to His glourious Majestie for them all:¹⁴

Alice made two things clear in this passage. Broadly speaking, her writing fulfilled a universal responsibility, “the dutie of every true Christian” to gratefully observe all God’s providential dealings. However, she had selected two aspects of providence for “perticuler remembrances,” namely, “favours, both spirituall and temporall” and “remarkable deliverances.” These were specifically occasions for thanksgiving.¹⁵ As a result, her *First Booke* was more focused than the spiritual life record typical of her time.¹⁶ Ralph Josselin’s famous diary, for example, was also “A thankfull observacion of divine providence and goodnes towards mee,” but Josselin did not narrow his observations to a particular type of providence.¹⁷ The introspective self-examination

¹⁴ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 1.

¹⁵ A similar distinction can be observed in Jeremy Taylor’s *Holy Living*, a devotional manual designed for private use in lieu of the proscribed *Book of Common Prayer*. Among his occasional prayers Taylor offered two different prayers of thanksgiving, one for “some great blessing” such as “the birth of an Heir, the success of an honest design, a victory, a good harvest, &c.,” and the other for “any special deliverance” such as surviving childbirth, sickness, battle, “or imminent danger at Sea or Land.” Jeremy Taylor, *The Rvle and Exercises of Holy Living* (London: Printed for Francis Ash, 1650), 385-388. Note that Nehemiah Wallington used the same sequence of terms as Alice (mercy, favour, deliverance): Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, 67.

¹⁶ On recording providences as a reason for life-writing, see John Beadle, *The Journal or Diary of a Thankful Christian. Presented in some Meditations upon Numb. 33.2*. (London: Printed by E. Cotes, for Tho. Parkhurst, 1656), ch. 1; Wear, “Puritan Perceptions,” 58-60; Sara Heller Mendelson, “Stuart Women’s Diaries and Occasional Memoirs,” in *Women in English Society*, 185-188; Mendelson, *Mental World*, 93-94, 103; Howard, “Imagining Pain,” 378-381; Ottway, “Autobiography,” 238; cf. Seaver, *Wallington’s World*, esp. ch. 1.

¹⁷ Ralph Josselin, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin 1616-1683*, ed. Alan Macfarlane (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 1.

that distinguishes his writing is largely replaced in Alice's by her emphasis on thanksgiving.

More comprehensive surveys of the occasions and reasons for thanksgiving can be found in devotional manuals, but Alice's explanation is valuable because it puts into words what other writers like Lady Halkett and Lady Fanshawe simply assumed.¹⁸ It shows how much more there was to the script of thanksgiving than the expression of relief after a narrow escape. Besides deliverance, there were many other occasions for thanksgiving. Alice singled out favours, a broader, less dramatic category of blessing. Perhaps then as much as now, favours were easily overlooked, since deliverances from coach- or shipwrecks, wartime dangers, domestic accidents, and illness capture attention in a way that favours such as religious upbringing, childhood health, financial security and reputation do not. In an autobiographical narrative, however, favours were consciously developed as important marks of God's approval. A favour such as financial provision or the birth of an heir often linked a sequence of prior deliverances. As a result, the best explanations of why thanksgiving mattered tend to appear in the context of favours rather than deliverances.

On the subject of why thanksgiving mattered – the “dutie” of Alice's preface – the women were clearly in agreement. As Alice said, it was important “to remember and take notice of” God's blessings. The women expressed strong regret if they had neglected a blessing. In the appendix of “Memorable accidents & Passages forgotten to be Entred” in her *First Booke*, Alice Thornton rebuked her “forgetfull soule” for allowing a childhood deliverance – and, by implication, her relative health in childhood – to “slip out of mind.”¹⁹ After her husband's horse unexpectedly attacked him, Lady Halkett mused on the importance of praying for protection even when no danger was anticipated. “[H]ow unworthy are wee of those blesings w^{ch} wee get

¹⁸ Joseph Hall, *The Devout Soul, or, Rules of Heavenly Devotion. Also, the Free Prisoner, or, The Comfort of Restraint*. (London: Printed by W.H., 1650), 77-83; Beadle, *Thankful Christian*, 140-150.

¹⁹ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 4; Anselment, “Manuscript Sources,” 154, nt. 7.

when wee neither seeke them nor are thankefull for them,” she reflected.²⁰ Even blessings which lay outside the normal range of memory, such as childhood accidents, or those which only became obvious when they were suspended, such as the natural order between master and animal, required careful accounting. To forget was ungrateful, and ingratitude was dangerous. As a popular manual on diary-keeping put it, “Unthankfulnesse is the grave, the hell of benefits, the curse of blessings, a wind that dries up mercies.”²¹ Hence Alice’s defense for enumerating all her mother’s expenditures on Alice’s behalf: “I have all the reason in the world not to concealle the great goodness of my gracious [God] in due acknowledgement and humble gratitude to his Devine Majesty.”²²

The danger of ingratitude implied its inverse, the benefits of gratitude. When put in positive terms, the duty of thanksgiving drew on seventeenth-century concepts of patronage and obligation. One of Joseph Hall’s devotional manuals, *The Devout Soul, or, Rules of Heavenly Devotion* (1643), explained how thanksgiving flowed naturally from a right relationship with God. The devout soul was humble, yet assiduous in seeking favour; it valued the blessings it received more for the relationship such gifts indicated than for their intrinsic worth.²³ To maintain the posture of a grateful and expectant suitor, Hall directed, the devout soul “keeps a just Inventory of all Gods favours” and “often spreads them thankfully before him and layes them forth (so near as it may) in the full dimensions; that so, God may be no loser by him in any act of his beneficence.”²⁴ The repeated display of God’s mercies through the exercise of calling them to mind and giving thanks for them would then lead to further blessings:

[T]he gratefull acknowledgement of favours, is the way to more; even amongst

²⁰ Halkett, NLS 6490.13, p. 89.

²¹ Beadle, *Thankful Christian*, “Epistle to the Reader.”

²² Thornton, *Autobiography*, 121.

²³ Hall, *Devout Soul*, 72-77.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 78.

men...this is the meanes to pull on further beneficence; how much more from the God of all Consolation, whose largest bounty diminisheth nothing of his store?²⁵

Thanksgiving was, implicitly, an expression of hope for future beneficence. As with human patronage relationships, favours conveyed obligations and kept the relationship alive.²⁶ But God was also the ultimate patron, so far above his suitors that the only possible return was gratitude and testimony; and even that was never equal to his blessings.

Since thankful remembrance involved repeated display, the duty of thanksgiving was an ongoing exercise. It was both a life-long discipline and one that continued beyond death as a posthumous testimony and a heavenly occupation. Alice in her preface assigned its duration to a lifetime, “even from the wombe, untill the grave burie them in silence.” Likewise, Lady Halkett’s longest passage of thanksgiving in her *True Accountt* was for the blessings she enjoyed in her husband’s home, “for w^{ch} I shall for ever blese my God and the memory...shall raise in mee praise to the Lord of bounty & mercy while I Live.”²⁷ Lady Fanshawe went farther, urging her son not only to “imitate” his deceased father’s virtues, but also to “praise God for him as long as you live here, and with him hereafter in y^e Kingdome of heaven.”²⁸ She set the example in her gratitude for her own father, saying she could “never...sufficiently praise God for him...but as in duty bound I will for ever say none had ever a kinder and better father yn myself.”²⁹ Devotional manuals also emphasized that the practice of thanksgiving on earth was

²⁵ Ibid., 82; cf. Beadle, *Thankful Christian*, “Epistle Dedicatory” and “Epistle to the Reader.”

²⁶ Curtis Perry, “Court and Coterie Culture,” in *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture*, ed. Michael Hattaway (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2003), 106; Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: The Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 1998). See also Jeffrey Powers-Beck, *Writing the Flesh: The Herbert Family Dialogue* (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1998), ch. 2; Joan Faust, “John Donne’s Verse Letters to Lucy Russell, Countess of Bedford: Rhetorical Means to a Friendship” (PhD, Louisiana State University, 1992).

²⁷ Halkett, BLA 32376, 34r.

²⁸ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 4r.

²⁹ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 11r-v.

preparation for one's "heavenly Task."³⁰

Implicit in the duty of thanksgiving was an audience other than God to hear the testimony and witness the display. This audience could be the surrounding community, whether family or neighbours specifically, or all fellow Christians in the abstract. Recent studies have pointed out how this aspect of thanksgiving could be a strategic ploy for women writers who needed to overcome traditional restrictions on women's speech.³¹ It was effective for both publication and the circulation of personal writing within the family. More than justification, however, thanksgiving provided a familiar structure for imitation. Because of the importance of thanksgiving, formal expressions of thanksgiving were ubiquitous in public worship and private devotion. These formal expressions were rooted in the Bible, especially the Psalms, and often contained a medley of biblical paraphrases, a style of writing common in personal writings as well.³² But beyond its scriptural basis, the overall structure and cadence of formal thanksgiving was distinctly liturgical, indicating the existence of a variety of models besides the Bible.

The routine use of thanksgiving can be seen in the *Book of Common Prayer*, which was likely these Anglican women's most familiar model for formal thanksgiving. As one of several standard elements of prayer, thanksgiving was not always set apart within the liturgy. Passages of thanksgiving and praise can be found in all the prayer book services, even those for somber occasions such as the burial of the dead. According to "The Order for Morning and Evening Prayer," thanksgiving and praise were among the chief purposes for corporate worship, along

³⁰ Hall, *Devout Soul*, 82; Beadle, *Thankful Christian*, "Epistle to the Reader."

³¹ Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 135-140; Ross, "Providence and Poetry."

³² On the effort to imitate the Bible's language, see Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 32-39, 148-149; Judith H. Anderson, *Biographical Truth: The Representation of Historical Persons in Tudor-Stuart Writing* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 34; Graham et al., *Her Own Life*, 5-6.

with hearing the Scripture and praying.³³ In the celebration of holy communion as well, thanksgiving was integral – the very meaning of the word “Eucharist.” Only after the newly reinstated prayer book was revised in 1662 were titled thanksgivings for seasonable weather, plenty, peace, and recovery from epidemic illness included among the occasional prayers.³⁴ Prior to 1662, the sole titled thanksgiving was the churching service for women, “The Thanksgiving of Women after Child-birth.”

Corporate thanksgiving had a private counterpart, especially in the Anglican liturgy where private devotion mirrored public worship.³⁵ Popular devotional manuals suggested times and models for daily thanksgiving. Jeremy Taylor’s *Holy Living* included “An Act of Thanksgiving” among “The first Prayers in the morning, as soon as we are dressed.”³⁶ Another well-known work, Joseph Hall’s *Arte of Divine Meditation*, placed thanksgiving at the close of the meditative exercise, to allow the mind to “descend by degrees” from its exalted thoughts.³⁷ Public holidays such as the Gunpowder Plot (5 November), celebrating the rescue of Parliament from Catholic plotters, and Royal Oak Day (29 May), celebrating Charles II’s restoration, were occasions for special thanksgiving in both public and private.³⁸ There were additional private occasions for thanksgiving such as birthdays and the anniversaries of personal deliverances.³⁹

Consistent use therefore made a formal style of thanksgiving accessible and familiar to both Alice and her audience. In the context of so many possible models, Alice’s use of that style

³³ “The Order for Morning and Evening Prayer,” *The Book of Common Prayer* (London: Printed by John Bill and Christopher Barker, 1662).

³⁴ “Preface” and “Prayers and Thanksgivings upon several occasions,” *Book of Common Prayer*; Spurr, *Restoration Church*, 40.

³⁵ Spurr, *Restoration Church*, 14-20; 331-375.

³⁶ Taylor, *Holy Living*, 40-41.

³⁷ Hall, *Divine Meditation*, 179-182.

³⁸ Cressy, “National Memory”; Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells*, 171-173; Cressy, “Protestant Calendar,” 36, 49-50. See also Halkett, NLS 6495.4, p. 71; NLS 6497.11, p. 283; Thornton, *Autobiography*, 229-230.

³⁹ Taylor, *Holy Living*, 389-390; Thomas Comber, *Memoirs of the Life and Death of the Right Honourable the Lord Deputy Wandesforde, Collected from Authentic Records and Mss. by His Great Grandson Thomas Comber*, Second Edition (Cambridge: J. Archdeacon, 1778), 14-15. See also Halkett, NLS 6499.39, p. 68-69, and NLS 6502.10, p. 213-215; NLS 6498.2, p. i-ii, and NLS 6502.9, p. 202-203.

no longer seems so unusual. Instead, what really distinguishes her writing from the other women's is the way she constructed her life narrative around these formal passages of thanksgiving. Unfortunately, it can be difficult to recognize in the Surtees edition how important thanksgiving was to Alice's structure. The nineteenth-century editors, trying to create an autobiography in their own terms, systematically reduced Alice's devotional passages as "unnecessary" and uninteresting.⁴⁰ In particular, they omitted most of the stand-alone prayers of thanksgiving and lament that Alice inserted following significant births, deaths and deliverances in her narrative.⁴¹ Since many of these incidents included illness, the editing has a considerable impact on how her illness narratives sound. The residual fragments of her devotional prayers often seem disjointed in the narratives, as scholars have noted – but the blame lies more with her editors than with Alice herself.

Thanksgiving after childbirth: Finding the personal within the formal

Even without editorial intervention to mar them, illness narratives that were written as formal thanksgivings for deliverance can be difficult to read because the conventional language masks the particularity of the experience. However, when there is sufficient evidence to make comparisons between different thanksgivings, and between thanksgiving and less formal narratives, it is possible to discover how even the most formal compositions were personalized. These women's thanksgivings after childbirth offer one such case. Childbirth narratives should not be equated with illness narratives, but childbirth and illness were often interconnected in

⁴⁰ Thornton, *Autobiography*, xv; cf. 15 nt, 27 nt; Anselment, "Manuscript Sources," discusses the omissions.

⁴¹ Alice's *First Booke* included separately titled thanksgivings for her escapes from shipwreck and from the Irish Rebellion of 1641, for the restoration of King Charles II, for several recoveries from serious illness, and for five of her nine deliveries in childbirth. Thornton, *Autobiography*, 15 nt, 32 nt, 36 nt, 88-90, 91 nt, 92 nt, 94, 98 nt, 127-128, 133 nt, 142-144. She also wrote prayers after some family deaths: Ibid., 27 nt, 68-70, 95 nt, 97 nt.

these women's experience.⁴² Childbirth thanksgivings are a type of formal thanksgiving frequently found in women's writing.⁴³ The popularity of the form demonstrates the strong biblical and liturgical precedent for giving thanks on the occasion, despite Puritan disapproval of the churching service and its suspension during the Interregnum when most of these women's children were born.⁴⁴ Lady Fanshawe and Lady Halkett each wrote at least one childbirth thanksgiving. Lady Halkett's, "a thanksgiving affter my deliverance outt of Childbed" at her first child's birth in 1656, appears in her earliest extant volume of meditations.⁴⁵ Lady Fanshawe inserted an untitled prayer of thanksgiving in her *Discourse* following the birth of her last son in 1665.⁴⁶ These two thanksgivings correspond with one of Alice's only stand-alone thanksgivings not omitted from the Surtees edition, "A praier and thankesgiveing for my deliverance of my first childe, August 6th, 1652."⁴⁷

In order to identify the ways in which each woman personalized her narrative, one must first become familiar with the conventional structure of these thanksgivings. All three compositions are prayers, distinct from any surrounding text by being addressed specifically to God and by other formal devices such as an opening invocation, closing "amen," or title. Though the prayers vary in length (Alice's is several pages long, while Lady Halkett's and Lady Fanshawe's are only a paragraph or two), each covers the same sequence of topics: thanksgiving

⁴² See Howard, "Imagining Pain," 373; Adrian Wilson, "The Ceremony of Childbirth and Its Interpretation," in *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England: Essays in Memory of Dorothy McLaren*, ed. Valerie A. Fildes (London: Routledge, 1990), 69-70; contrast Anselment, *Realms of Apollo*, 49.

⁴³ See for example Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton, *Subordination and Authorship in Early Modern England: The Case of Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton and Her "loose Papers,"* ed. Betty S. Travitsky (Tempe, AZ: Arizona Center for Medieval and Renaissance Studies, 1999); Elizabeth Mordaunt, *The Priuate Diarie of Elizabeth, Viscountess Mordaunt* (Duncairn, 1856); cf. Colin B. Atkinson and William P. Stoneman, "'These griping greefes and pinching pang's': Attitudes to Childbirth in Thomas Bentley's *The Monument of Matrones* (1582)," *The Sixteenth Century Journal* 21, no. 2 (1990): 193-203.

⁴⁴ Cressy, "Purification," 106-107, 117-121.

⁴⁵ Halkett, NLS 6489.9.2, p. 257-259.

⁴⁶ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 97v-98r.

⁴⁷ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 88-90.

and praise, confession of sin, and dedication to God's service.⁴⁸ Confession and dedication were standard elements of thanksgiving, so their inclusion in these prayers is not unusual.⁴⁹ Still, they had particular significance in the context of childbirth. The mother's pain and extremity were often attributed to the curse on Eve in Genesis 3.16, while the child's introduction and the mother's reintroduction to the world became occasions for new commitment to godly living.⁵⁰

Besides the formality of their structure and topic sequence, these thanksgivings are further distanced from the events they described by their oblique references to childbirth. Either they mentioned childbirth indirectly or used conventional phrases and images to describe it. Apart from its title, Alice Thornton's lengthy thanksgiving used the word "childe-birth" just once, and only alluded to the child's death as God's giving her "the lesse comforts heere on earth."⁵¹ Lady Fanshawe made no reference at all to childbirth in her thanksgiving, only to "y^e great mercy to us in our son"; the prayer's placement immediately after her son's birth is what supplies the connection for the reader.⁵² The clearest references to childbirth occur in Lady Halkett's thanksgiving. "Hath nott many beene distracted and lost there eyes and limbs in bringing forth a dead or an imperfect child. Many better then I beene impatient under that triall," she reflected, but "my god thou wert pleased to bring my child through the darke cabanes of the

⁴⁸ Other women's thanksgivings after childbirth also emphasized these elements: Mordaunt, *Priuate Diarie*, 49-51, 93-95, 104-106, 128-130, 184-185; Egerton, *Subordination and Authorship*, 180.

⁴⁹ See, for example, the two thanksgivings "For Deliverance from the Plague, or Other Common Sickness" added to the *Book of Common Prayer* in 1662. Given that the Psalms were a key influence on seventeenth-century thanksgiving, it is interesting that biblical scholars also consider certain elements characteristic of "complaint Psalms": complaint, petition, praise and thanksgiving. The elements are not always in the same order, and the transition between elements can be abrupt – just as Alice's readers have observed about her prayers of thanksgiving. See Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 516-521.

⁵⁰ On Eve's curse and childbirth, see Anselment, *Realms of Apollo*, ch. 2, esp. 52-53; Adrian Wilson, "The Perils of Early Modern Procreation: Childbirth with or without Fear?," *British Journal of Eighteenth Century Studies* 16 (1993): 3; Howard, "Imagining Pain," 373; Atkinson and Stoneman, "Attitudes to Childbirth," 197; Lucinda M. Becker, "The Absent Body: Representations of Dying Early Modern Women in a Selection of Seventeenth-Century Diaries," *Women's Writing* 8, no. 2 (2001): 254. On (re)dedication following childbirth, see "The Ministration of Publick Baptism of Infants" and "The Thanksgiving of Women after Child-birth," *Book of Common Prayer*.

⁵¹ The remainder of the thanksgiving responded to Alice's prolonged illness (Thornton, *Autobiography*, 89).

⁵² Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 97v.

wombe into the world perfect in outward parts.”⁵³ Concern about a malformed baby or insupportable pain were common in childbirth prayers, while the image of the womb as a dark cabin was an even more widespread metaphor.⁵⁴ Lady Halkett’s phrases, though vivid, cannot be taken as a literal description of her own experience.

The formality of these prayers and their lack of specific details would appear to confirm scholarly concerns that religious language obscured individual illness experience by imposing an artificial uniformity of expression. Yet, conventional as they are, these prayers prove to be highly individual creations that did communicate a particular experience. Even without specific details about childbirth, the prayers responded to the specific situations the women had faced. The women’s distinct experiences emerged in their use of convention: how they adapted the models they were using, which elements of a typical thanksgiving’s sequence they emphasized, and what criteria influenced their decision to compose a formal thanksgiving at all.

In the first place, though the women were thoroughly familiar with models such as the Bible and the *Book of Common Prayer*, they were not merely copying them. It is difficult to find any specific connection between their thanksgivings and the prayer book’s “Thanksgiving of Women after Child-birth,” which was probably the most familiar model. Use of the word “deliverance,” one suggested link, is too common to be significant since it also appears in other prayer book thanksgivings.⁵⁵ The closest parallel to the churching service is Alice Thornton’s paraphrase of Psalm 116.3-4 in her thanksgiving: “I called upon my God, in my anguish of

⁵³ Halkett, NLS 6489.9.2, p. 257-258.

⁵⁴ See, for example, Egerton, *Subordination and Authorship*, 181-184; John Donne, *Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions; and, Death’s Duel*, ed. Andrew Motion (New York: Vintage Books, 1999), 157-158. Cf. Halkett, NLS 6490.29, p. 246-247; NLS 6500.69, p. 365.

⁵⁵ Graham, “Women’s Writing,” 228; Howard, “Imagining Pain,” 378. Compare the thanksgivings in the *Book of Common Prayer* “for peace and deliverance from our enemies” and “for deliverance from the plague, or other common sickness.”

spiritt and heavinesse I did complaine...when death had compassed me about.”⁵⁶ Psalm 116 was used in the churching service, but only after 1662. The allusion might have been intentional, yet Alice would have been well-read in the Psalms even without the prayer book.⁵⁷ The connection between these women’s thanksgivings and the prayer book is more complex. While the women’s prayers covered the same topics of deliverance, praise, and dedication as the churching service, they also incorporated themes from other prayer book services. Lady Fanshawe’s dedication of her son most resembled the service for infant baptism, a sacrament to which Lady Halkett also explicitly referred.⁵⁸ Alice Thornton’s reflections echoed the homily in the “Order for the Visitation of the Sick,” and her rededication of herself and her marriage in the second half of her prayer drew on the marriage service.⁵⁹

In the second place, the women arranged the formal elements of thanksgiving to fit their individual stories. Each woman’s thanksgiving emphasized a different element of the form – praise, confession, or dedication – that typified her particular experience in childbirth. Lady Halkett focused on praise for her own deliverance and a healthy child. Her fears of a fatal outcome, recorded in her “Mother’s Will to her unborne child,” were relieved; her labour had been successful, both in how she handled herself and in the birth of a daughter “perfect in outward parts.”⁶⁰ The contrasting emphasis on confession and rededication in Alice Thornton’s thanksgiving reflected her more difficult experience. Although she survived the birth, the child did not, and Alice was seriously ill for nine months afterwards. Thanksgiving for her ultimate recovery was tempered by the need to accept her sickness – and, implicitly, the loss of her child

⁵⁶ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 88. Alice reversed the order of the verses and scattered them among other reflections.

⁵⁷ Suzanne Trill, “‘Speaking to God in his Phrase and Word’: Women’s Use of the Psalms in Early Modern England,” in *The Nature of Religious Language: A Colloquium*, ed. Stanley E. Porter (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 1996), 276-277; Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 39-53; Ross, “Providence and Poetry,” 187-188.

⁵⁸ See “The Ministration of Publick Baptism of Infants” in the *Book of Common Prayer*.

⁵⁹ See “The Form of Solemnization of Matrimony.”

⁶⁰ Halkett, NLS 6489.9.1, p. 198-265; NLS 6489.9.2, 257-258.

– as “the punishment of my iniquities.”⁶¹ Lady Fanshawe’s thanksgiving for her son’s birth differs from the other two women’s thanksgivings because it was not about her own deliverance at all. At the end of a long childbearing career, after fourteen live births and four miscarriages, her gratitude was for the “great mercy” of a son and heir.⁶² She carefully dedicated this son, the only one of eleven to survive, to God’s protection and guidance.

Whether the women chose to write a formal thanksgiving at all after a childbirth experience also depended on the particulars. Lady Fanshawe’s thanksgiving for her last son has no counterpart among the other births mentioned in her *Discourse*. Since she seldom gave any details about her deliveries, the unusual thanksgiving highlights both the importance of the event and her own relief. For Lady Halkett, expressions of thanksgiving appear to correspond to the ease of the delivery. Among her surviving childbirth narratives, the two which use more thanksgiving language were shorter and less complicated.⁶³ When she wrote of more difficult childbirth experiences she emphasized resignation, confession, and rededication instead, much like Alice Thornton did after her difficult first delivery.⁶⁴ Alice included four other childbirth thanksgivings in her *First Booke*, one for each of her children who survived their first year; she did not write thanksgivings after any of her deliveries (other than the first) when the child died soon after birth.⁶⁵ Each of these women used thanksgiving after childbirth according to a different pattern, but in all three cases the formal thanksgivings provide a perspective that is distinct from other types of childbirth narrative.

When formal thanksgivings appear in an autobiographical narrative, as Lady Fanshawe’s

⁶¹ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 84-88; 89.

⁶² Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 97v; cf. Taylor, *Holy Living*, 385-388.

⁶³ Halkett, NLS 6489.9.2, p. 257-258; NLS 6491.51.6, p. 316-319. Her meditation on her second child’s birth is lost; it is listed in the catalogue of manuscripts at the back of S[imon] C[oopers], *The Life of the Lady Halket* (Edinburgh: Printed for Mr. Andrew Symson and Mr. Henry Knox, 1701).

⁶⁴ Halkett, NLS 6490.3, p. 1-9 (a difficult miscarriage); NLS 6490.33, p. 297-324.

⁶⁵ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 91 nt, 92 nt, 94, 142-144; contrast 97 nt. Of these thanksgivings, the Surtees edition only contains fragments of the fourth (for her son Robert’s birth).

and Alice Thornton's do, their relationship to the rest of the narrative is ambiguous. There is always the possibility that the thanksgiving, like any other insertion, was being reused from an earlier source. The resulting interpretive challenge is well-illustrated in Alice's thanksgiving for her first delivery. In her *First Booke*, it follows a prose narrative of the same experience, which Alice labeled a meditation.⁶⁶ Though the two compositions appear in sequence, they differ significantly in scope and point. In the thanksgiving, Alice focused more narrowly on the danger of her condition, her "preservation from death and distruction," and the need to respond appropriately to God's "dealing unto Thy handmaide."⁶⁷ The preceding meditation took a broader view, detailing the entire pregnancy and the illnesses before and after the delivery as a foretaste of her difficult married life. Likewise, although the religious outlook in each piece is essentially the same, expressing praise, dependence on God, and patience during illness, the net effect on Alice's self-portrayal is different. In the meditation she was resigned and willing to die. The thanksgiving, by contrast, described her sense of sinfulness and the temptation to question whether God's dealings really worked for the best. Even though no explanation was necessary for Alice and her readers, the differences in time and type of composition must be considered when these two pieces are read together as an illness narrative.

Re-reading thanksgiving in Alice Thornton's *First Booke of My Life*

The arrangement of Alice's childbirth thanksgiving and its accompanying meditation is one example of the juxtaposition of narrative and devotional passages that happens throughout her writing. Rather than writing a continuous narrative, Alice described each event or situation in its own "meditation," which usually contained a devotional response and was sometimes followed by an additional prayer. Although Alice's meditations only loosely resemble the

⁶⁶ "Meditations upon my deliverance of my first childe, and of the great sickness followed for three quarters of a yeare; August 6, 1652, lasted till May 12, 1653." Ibid., 84-88.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 88.

formal exercise of devotional meditation, her inclusion of a response and prayer after some meditations fit that model.⁶⁸ This method of composition enabled her to make extensive use of earlier material, without necessarily revising it to reflect her perspective in widowhood. The process of integrating earlier writing that can be traced in a few examples probably occurred more regularly.⁶⁹ All of Alice's writing needs to be read as part of a continuum from early, private devotional writing to later, public apology – a continuum in which her long-term writing habits were increasingly moulded by her troubles in life, especially the dramatic crisis points of debt, scandal and widowhood.

Several readers have noted that Alice was using a variety of sources for her writing in widowhood, but the only source that has been studied in detail is her *Booke of Remembrances*.⁷⁰ This manuscript, which has only survived on microfilm, was an earlier, shorter version of the *First Booke*.⁷¹ Since the *Remembrances* does not contain the lengthy prayers of thanksgiving and lament that appear in the *First Booke*, attention has focused on how those prayers contribute

⁶⁸ It is difficult to evaluate Alice's meditative practice based on the Surtees edition, since the editors removed an unknown quantity of devotional material. In general, she emphasized narrative over application and response; Lady Halkett's meditations are a more complete example of the meditative exercise (see Hall, *Divine Meditation*; Ambrose, *Compleat Works*, 182-185; Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics*, 147-178; H. Fisch, "Bishop Hall's Meditations," *Review of English Studies* 25, no. 99 (1949): 210-221). Alice's loose adaptation of meditation in an apologetic context has an interesting parallel in *Eikon Basilike*, a series of "meditations" attributed to King Charles I. The book was immensely popular, and Alice had read it. See Rivers, "Prayer-book Devotion," 205-206; Elizabeth Skerpan Wheeler, "Eikon Basilike and the Rhetoric of Self-Representation," in *The Royal Image: Representations of Charles I*, ed. Thomas N. Corns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 122-140; Holly Faith Nelson and Jim Daems, eds., *Eikon Basilike: The Portraiture of His Sacred Majesty in His Solitudes and Sufferings: With Selections from Eikonoklastes, John Milton* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Editions, 2006); Thornton, *Autobiography*, 56-57; Rhoda F. Cairns, "The Exegesis of Experience: Typology and Women's Rhetorics in Early Modern England and New England" (PhD, Miami University, 2008), 55, 60-61.

⁶⁹ Alice's practice of rewriting earlier source material reflected contemporary biographical techniques. Compare C[oooper], *Life of Lady Halket*, which borrowed long selections from Lady Halkett's meditations and often only lightly revised her *True Accountt*. See also the following discussions of Izaak Walton's *Life of Dr. Donne* (1640): Anderson, *Biographical Truth*, 57-61; Jessica Martin, *Walton's Lives: Conformist Commemorations and the Rise of Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), xi, 176-194. Other seventeenth-century women writers who left multiple versions of their life narrative include Elizabeth Freke and Elizabeth Isham.

⁷⁰ Howard, "Imagining Pain," 380; Anselment, "Apology," 3.

⁷¹ Excerpts are printed in Graham et al., *Her Own Life*, 147-164; for comparisons of the two versions, see Graham, "Women's Writing," 211, 228-229; and Anselment, "Apology."

to the apologetic emphasis of Alice's writing in widowhood.⁷² However, at least some of the devotional material that Alice added to her *First Booke* was written much earlier. The communion prayers written by her parents, and her mother's prayer and thanksgiving for the delivery of Alice's fourth child, are the clearest proof.⁷³ Alice also cross-referenced and presumably copied passages from her own writing, including the "paper booke" mentioned in the introduction and at least one "booke of meditations."⁷⁴ Though her writing became increasingly focused on defensive biography in its later stages, she never ceased to consider it a devotional exercise. Her statement of purpose for the *First Booke* – "to furnish my heart with the deepe thoughts and apprehensions and sincere meditations of and thankfullnesse for [God's] free grace, love, mercys, and inconceivable goodness to me" – applied to subsequent manuscripts as well.⁷⁵ In her will, she identified the three manuscripts of her autobiography as "Meditations and Transactions of my life."⁷⁶ Devotional passages were, in effect, the core of Alice's writing, and they should not be passed over as mere insertions in a primarily autobiographical narrative.

The way that Alice's writing began within a devotional framework and then progressed into a more consciously autobiographical apology creates a layered effect in her illness narratives.⁷⁷ This chapter's opening story, Alice's "greatt sickness at Oswoldkirke," illustrates how an illness narrative could develop a composite meaning without significant alteration in content. Alice's first version of this story, a "paper booke upon this great deliverance," was simply a devotional composition giving thanks for recovery from illness, possibly influenced by

⁷² Anselment, "Apology," 4-5; "Manuscript Sources," 138-142.

⁷³ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 27 nt, 93-94, 117-118. Her father died in 1640, her mother in 1659; Alice was writing her *First Booke* in 1669. On her parents' devotional writing, see also Comber, *Wandesforde Memoirs*, 32-33.

⁷⁴ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 133, 143, 153. Her copying techniques can be observed by comparing the *Booke of Remembrances* with the *First Booke of My Life*.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 1. Cf. Anselment, "Manuscript Sources," though I disagree that the theme of gratitude for deliverance was weakened by the "secular" evidence Alice presented in later manuscripts; contrast Ross, "Providence and Poetry."

⁷⁶ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 378.

⁷⁷ Rhoda Cairns also notes the layering of meaning in Alice's writing ("Exegesis of Experience," 53-54).

the *Book of Common Prayer*.⁷⁸ As time passed, the deliverance became more significant. The birth of a son seven months later absorbed the recovery from illness into one of Alice's main themes in her *First Booke*, her eleven-year quest for a son. The "greatt sickness" acquired new status as the first of "five great trialls and hazards of miscarige" from which Alice was delivered during her most important pregnancy.⁷⁹ Besides its status as a deliverance, the illness also marked the nadir of the quest, when Alice's losses – the deaths of two infant sons and her own mother, interspersed with her own prolonged illnesses and her husband's disastrous debts – left her deeply depressed.⁸⁰

The birth of a son was important in its own right, since it secured the Thornton estate within William and Alice's family; it was the best guarantee that Alice and her daughters would be provided for in the event of William's death.⁸¹ But when William did die, six years after his son's birth, Alice's quest for a son took on still more significance as proof of her wifely virtue. At the time of William's death, the Thornton family was facing a crisis of reputation as well as a hopelessly indebted estate.⁸² Scandalous rumours had surfaced, suggesting that Alice was cheating on William both financially and sexually with the local clergyman, Thomas Comber.⁸³

⁷⁸ Alice's phrase "filling my mouth and soule with abundant gladnesse and praise" echoes Psalm 71.8: "O let my mouth be filled with thy praise: that I may sing of thy glory and honour all the day long," used in the "Order of the Visitation of the Sick." Thornton, *Autobiography*, 133; 1640 Book of Common Prayer.

⁷⁹ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 140.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 95-98, 118-119, 123-127. On Alice's depression, see Anselment, "Manuscript Sources," 140-141; cf. Wallace Notestein, *English Folk: A Book of Characters*, 1st ed. (London: Jonathan Cape, 1938), 194-195. The relevant material is omitted from the Surtees edition (but note the passage on how Alice was comforted by taking the sacrament: Thornton, *Autobiography*, 204-206).

⁸¹ According to Alice's marriage articles, the estate was to descend to her heirs, male or female. But the marriage articles were constantly being adjusted due to William's debts, and Alice feared that she and her daughters would be left with nothing if William died (Ibid., 278-281; cf. 231-232). As a married woman, Alice was subject to "coverture," the husband's legal control over all his wife's property (Tim Stretton, "Women, Property and Law," in *Companion to Women's Writing*, 42-43; Erickson, *Women and Property*, 24-26).

⁸² References to William's debts are scattered throughout the Surtees edition, but the key summaries are Thornton, *Autobiography*, 239-250, 265-269, 280 and 280 nt.

⁸³ Ibid., 166-167, 221-227, 274-278. For the best secondary summaries of the scandal, see Anselment, "Deliverances"; "Apology," 2-4; "Manuscript Sources," 142-144. The scandal is difficult to summarize well because it involved so many different relationships and tensions. The usual synopsis, that Alice was being attacked by a discontented niece-in-law and her servant, was only the tip of the iceberg; apparently, these two women started

The real state of affairs, an intended marriage between Comber and the Thorntons' eldest daughter, also encountered resistance from otherwise sympathetic family and friends.⁸⁴ In this crisis, Alice's devotional writing took on an apologetic role. A few weeks after William's death, she sent to her Aunt Norton "my owne Booke of my Life, the collections of God's dealings and mercys to me and all mine" as proof of her innocence and the prudence of her daughter's marriage.⁸⁵ In the months that followed, she began rewriting this "Booke," presumably her *Booke of Remembrances*, into her *First Booke of My Life*, consciously developing her devotional writing into a narrative of undeserved suffering as a response to her detractors.⁸⁶

The story of Alice's deliverance from illness at Oswoldkirke never ceased to be an occasion for thanksgiving, because it was always important to remember and repeat God's blessings. But as the significance of Alice's recovery grew, so did the magnitude of her suffering: the suffering of illness became the travail of producing a son and heir, which in turn came to exemplify all the hardship Alice had endured in marriage for her family's sake. The story demonstrates the manner in which long, overarching themes such as her quest for a son joined individual deliverances that originally had their own distinct perspective. A similar

and fanned the rumours. But the marriage between Alice's daughter and the clergyman, the real heart of the issue (see the following note), epitomized Alice's long-standing concerns about her children's financial provision and religious education in the event of her death. The local factors that made her apprehensive – the religious differences between herself and William's family and neighbourhood, and the financial troubles that kept her socially inferior – had been festering for years; they isolated her and made her an easy target for scandal. See especially Thornton, *Autobiography*, 215-216, 231-232, 236 nt, 238.

⁸⁴ On the family's early relationship with Thomas Comber, and his suit for and marriage to the Thorntons' eldest daughter, see *Ibid.*, 153-156, 216-221, 227-233. Alice's family disapproved of the "match" because Comber was only a protégé of the Thorntons, not (yet) a social equal; more importantly, neither he nor the Thorntons had the funds each so badly needed (*Ibid.*, 225-227, 254-255). However, the Thorntons had social connections that benefited Comber, and he respected the family. He became a successful clergyman and Alice's mainstay during her long widowhood. See Andrew M. Coleby, "Comber, Thomas (1645-1699)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6024>; Thomas Comber, *The Autobiographies and Letters of Thomas Comber, Sometime Precentor of York and Dean of Durham*, ed. C. E. Whiting, 2 vols. (Durham: Andrews & Co., 1947).

⁸⁵ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 259. Aunt Norton (Alice's father's sister) was a key ally of Alice's after her mother's death. For her role in advising and vindicating Alice during the scandal, see *Ibid.*, 237-239.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 271-272; cf. Anselment, "Apology," 2-3; and "Manuscript Sources," 136 (though Anselment assumes that Alice circulated the *First Booke* rather than the *Remembrances*).

explanation applies to the story of Alice's fifth delivery, which Anne Lear summarized as "Thank God for Haemorrhoids!"⁸⁷ That story is also part of the grand theme of Alice's quest for a son. It has to be read in full from the difficult delivery and sickness all the way to recovery and the next pregnancy, which was a happy ending to the family's fears that Alice would be barren.⁸⁸ Throughout the sequence, Alice used devotional passages appropriate to the context: a prayer after the death of her son, and a thanksgiving after her own recovery from the haemorrhoids.⁸⁹ She was not giving thanks for suffering itself; the thanksgiving language that troubles Lear actually anticipated Alice's final recovery, several pages later.

The script of thanksgiving worked to Alice's advantage at every step of her writing project. It helped to create her story by providing the initial occasion and structure to record her experience. Next, it facilitated and legitimated the conversion of a private record of God's dealings into a public apology following the death of her husband. On a practical level, Alice's *Booke of Remembrances* was ideal for circulation. Alice was too sick and overwhelmed with business in the aftermath of William's death to compose a defense on the spur of the moment. The book was small enough that her Aunt Norton was able to read it and respond quickly. She approved, writing to Alice that "'it was not writt as if a weake woman might have don it, but might have become a devine.'" ⁹⁰ Another female relative read the book "with a great delight" and defended Alice vigorously to others.⁹¹ By invoking the duty of thanksgiving, Alice had effectively side-stepped the problems of making her own writing public and of seeming to praise

⁸⁷ Lear, "Illness and Identity," 342-343.

⁸⁸ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 95-98.

⁸⁹ "A praier upon my preservation affter the birth of my first sonne, and his death," and "A thanksgiveing affter my recovery." Ibid., 97 nt, 98 nt.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 260.

⁹¹ Ibid., 259. Anselment quotes another female relative's positive reaction (not printed in the Surtees edition): "Manuscript Sources," 151.

herself.⁹² Thanksgiving was more important than social restrictions on women's writing, and it cast self-defense in the best light as testimony to God's goodness.⁹³

The successful circulation of the *Remembrances* inspired Alice's expansion of her *Remembrances* into her *First Booke*, with its still greater emphasis on past occasions for thanksgiving in the midst of her immediate difficulties as a widow. Alice did eventually organize more technical evidence in her defense, such as a packet of letters relating to her daughter's marriage, and other materials documenting how certain family members had taken financial advantage of her.⁹⁴ She bequeathed both the devotional writing and the documents to her children as "full evidences of truth consarning this bussiness" and "a justification of my innocency."⁹⁵ But by then the "truth" hardly mattered; the scandal was forgotten and her financial troubles past redress. Her descendants valued her writing not for its apologetics but for the evidence that their ancestress was "*illustrious* for all the Virtues of *Prosperity* and *Adversity*."⁹⁶ One might say it is thanks to thanksgiving that historians still have Alice's illness narratives, nearly three-and-a-half centuries after they were written.

Conclusion

Early modern thanksgiving was more complex than its short, formulaic expressions suggest. Since future blessings depended on the grateful remembrance of past blessings, it was an essential religious duty. It was also thoroughly familiar to seventeenth-century writers, who encountered formal expressions of it on a regular basis in public worship. For both these reasons, familiarity with the script of thanksgiving is an important tool for historians of illness

⁹² Women's devotional writing was usually only seen and praised posthumously: Mendelson, "Stuart Women's Diaries," 183-185; Crawford, *Women and Religion*, 78-79; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 316.

⁹³ Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing*, 135-137, 140; Ross, "Providence and Poetry," 192-199. Cf. Trill, "Religion and the Construction of Femininity," 31.

⁹⁴ See for example Thornton, *Autobiography*, 224-225, 253-258, 265-269.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 257.

⁹⁶ Comber, *Wandesforde Memoirs*, v; cf. Mendelson, "Stuart Women's Diaries," 185; Crawford, *Women and Religion*, 91.

experience. The script is necessary for understanding illness narratives that use more formal thanksgiving language; the individual details in the narrative have to be located within the formal structure of the language and not simply gleaned from the surface. The script also helps to identify relationships between individual illness narratives within these women's broader narrative themes. As Alice recorded her quest for a son, she linked multiple deliverances over the years into the grand mercy of her son's birth. Her thanksgiving language applied not only to individual deliverances but also to the overall theme she was emphasizing.

Even when the women expressed thanksgiving less formally, as Lady Fanshawe and Lady Halkett did, they assumed that readers understood the full script. Like Alice, they employed the duty of grateful testimony to justify their writing. Lady Fanshawe used thanksgiving to highlight the characters of her husband and her father, two role models for her young son.⁹⁷ Despite using minimal thanksgiving language, Lady Halkett intended her *True Accountt* to testify to "the wonderfull power & mercy of God in Suporting mee" in the midst of considerable difficulties.⁹⁸ Both women relied on devotional writing in their autobiographical narratives as well, though not to the extent that Alice Thornton did. Lady Fanshawe copied several prayers into her *Discourse to My Son*, two of her own composition and two written by her husband's chaplains, as well as a poem translated by her husband.⁹⁹ Lady Halkett used her devotional writing as a source for her *True Accountt*. The key motive for Alice's unusual method of composition seems to have been the need for immediate circulation right after her husband's death; the other two women had more time and leisure to develop their narratives.

Seeing how familiarity with the script of thanksgiving can facilitate the reading of illness narratives encourages attention to other types of religious language as well. Not only does

⁹⁷ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 4r, 11r-v.

⁹⁸ Halkett, NLS 6494.7, p. 294.

⁹⁹ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 97v-98r, 108r-110r, 121r.

knowing the script help the reader to find the particular story within the convention, it leads to a better appreciation of religious language's flexibility and early modern women writers' ability to manipulate it while remaining within its boundaries. Observing the script's place in the larger writing process also shows how the context of life-writing influenced the presentation of illness experience, confirming the importance of reading illness narratives in light of their original social and literary context.

CHAPTER TWO

To “dye as a good Christian”: The Script of the Good Death

In contrast to the exhaustive record of illness experience that the script of thanksgiving prompted Alice Thornton to make, Lady Halkett used another religious script, the good death, to link a more limited selection of illness narratives in her *True Accountt of My Life*.¹ Each of the five major illness narratives in the *True Accountt* is presented as a good death scene, outlining the requisite preparations for death and emphasizing the sufferer’s piety and resignation throughout the ordeal. That Lady Halkett relied on the script of the good death to this extent is already notable, since modern critics typically praise her avoidance of ponderous religious rhetoric.² But the connection among the five illness narratives, which the use of the script implies, is also puzzling. Only two of the narratives actually end as expected, in death. Though they are conventional good death narratives, the stories appear incidental to the main storyline and therefore unimportant.³ The other three illness narratives describe Lady Halkett’s near-death experiences. She regarded these as “testimony of Gods favor in raising mee from the gates of death” and proof of her “injured Vertue,” which gives them a clear rhetorical function in the *True Accountt*; but since Lady Halkett recovered they are not typically read as good death

¹ Halkett, BLA 32376, 17v-18v, 19r-20r, 38r-v, 47v, 50v-51r. Lady Halkett mentioned other illness incidents, but without developing a narrative around them: the Howard family’s illness (18v-19r), her own practice of charity physic (37r-38r, 39r-v, 55v), the Earl of Balcarres’s chronic illness (50v), and her own illness during Sir James Halkett’s absence in London (54r).

² “[C]onsidering the voluminous piety of the lady, [the autobiography] is almost incredibly free from moralizing and weighty ornament,” wrote L. M. Cumming, “Anne, Lady Halkett,” *Blackwood’s Magazine* 216 (November 1924): 655. “[N]o confessional or didactic motive is apparent” and so the autobiography is “an exceptionally straightforward narrative, unmarred by any attempt to frame a cautionary or exemplary tale,” in the opinion of Margaret Smith Bottrall, *Every Man a Phoenix: Studies in Seventeenth-Century Autobiography* (London: John Murray, 1958), 151, 159. According to Paul Delany, *British Autobiography in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 164, Lady Halkett “had strong moral principles but, as a devout Anglican, left sermons to the parson.” See also Wayne Shumaker, *English Autobiography: Its Emergence, Materials, and Form* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954), 23; Estelle C. Jelinek, *The Tradition of Women’s Autobiography from Antiquity to the Present* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1986), 30; Ottway, “They Only Lived Twice,” 137.

³ Sharon Cadman Seelig criticizes one of the death scenes as a lapse in Lady Halkett’s writing style (*Autobiography and Gender*, 121-122). Otherwise, scholars take little note of either death scene.

narratives.⁴ A rereading is needed: evidently Lady Halkett's personal illness narratives were more stylized, and her good death narratives more relevant to her story, than they seem.

Noticing Lady Halkett's reliance on the good death script contributes, at one level, to the rereading of her *True Accountt* the rediscovery of her manuscript *Meditations* has sparked.⁵ These long-overlooked writings reveal her interest in the good death and illuminate her motives for connecting her survival with others' deaths in the *True Accountt*. Her intriguing use of the script applies more broadly as well, by challenging common scholarly perceptions of the good death. The good death has a reputation for being an excessively demanding religious convention that produced uniformly idealized death scenes; as some scholars point out, the rigorous pattern raises questions about the historical reliability of good death narratives.⁶ Lady Halkett's manner of using the good death script shows that, for her, the convention was less an obligation than a strategic opportunity. Similar freedom can be observed in Lady Fanshawe's and Alice Thornton's writings, where the conventions of the good death were tailored to suit each writer's individual purpose. The reliability of these women's good death narratives depends not just on the formal conventions of the script but also, more importantly, on why each story was told.

To a certain extent, the good death script deserves its reputation for embellishing the facts. Dying a good death was a well-established tradition, handed down to the seventeenth century from medieval practice.⁷ Since deathbed conduct was popularly regarded as an

⁴ Ibid., 51r, 53v. Cf. Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender*, 125; Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, 240.

⁵ See Trill, "Lady Anne Halkett"; "Meditations"; *Lady Halkett: Self-Writings*; Wiseman, *Conspiracy and Virtue*, 319-333.

⁶ See for example Andrew Wear, "Interfaces: Perceptions of Health and Illness in Early Modern England," in *Problems and Methods in the History of Medicine*, ed. Roy Porter and Andrew Wear (London: Croom Helm, 1987), 243; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 4; Howard, "Imagining Pain," 371; Lucinda M. Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), 24, 69-70; cf. Allan Pritchard, *English Biography in the Seventeenth Century: A Critical Survey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 6, 53.

⁷ For a thorough history of the good death, see Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*. On the literary tradition of dying well, see Nancy Lee Beaty, *The Craft of Dying: A Study in the Literary Tradition of the Ars Moriendi in England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970).

indication of a person's eternal state, a good death was a social as well as a spiritual necessity. For the most part, witnesses were careful to give a favourable version of the final scene, and what factual liberties were allowed by charity and respect could be further justified as making the dead person an instructive example of the good death to others.⁸ The propriety of these customs versus their artificiality was already debated in the seventeenth century.⁹ That debate has fuelled modern scholarship's more skeptical argument that few people could have performed the overwhelming demands of the good death.¹⁰ Good death narratives, by implication, were inherently exaggerated. A few critics have gone so far as to suggest that the good death script could displace the historical individual altogether.¹¹

Good death narratives undeniably mixed fact and fiction and aligned individual experience within a generic pattern.¹² They need not, however, be dismissed as complete fabrications. The contexts in which good death narratives were composed could differ significantly, thereby affecting how the good death was presented. Most critical analysis of good death narratives is based on funeral sermons and exemplary lives, printed sources that were designed to focus on a single good death narrative.¹³ Personal writings like Lady Halkett's, by

⁸ Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 4, 317-320; cf. 154, 161, 203-204; Martin, *Walton's Lives*, 22-24, 142-148; Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman*, 24, 104-106.

⁹ Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 317-320; Pritchard, *English Biography*, 17.

¹⁰ Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 165, 218; Houlbrooke, "Puritan Death-bed," 143-144; Porter and Porter, *Sickness and Health*, 247-248, 255. This reservation often surfaces in comments on the good deaths of women and children: see, for example, Houlbrooke, "Puritan Death-bed," 132-134, 140-142; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 163, 187-188; Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman*, 48, 107.

¹¹ Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman*, 20, 47-48, 104, 107; Deborah Rubin, "The Mourner in the Flesh: George Herbert's Commemoration of Magdalen Herbert in *Memoriae Matris Sacrum*," in *Men Writing the Feminine: Literature, Theory and the Question of Genders*, ed. Thais E. Morgan (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 14-15. These are feminist literary critics, for whom religious conventions – especially sermons – are inherently problematic as a "male discourse."

¹² See Pritchard, *English Biography*, 58 (cf. 6, 53); and the suggestive critique of Katherine Stubbes's famous good death narrative in Alexandra Walsham, "'A Glose of Godlines': Philip Stubbes, Elizabethan Grub Street and the Invention of Puritanism," in *Belief and Practice in Reformation England: A Tribute to Patrick Collinson from his Students*, ed. Susan Wabuda and Caroline Litzenberger (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), 188-191.

¹³ Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, ch. 10; Martin, *Walton's Lives*, ch. 3; P. G. Stanwood, "Consolatory Grief in the Funeral Sermons of Donne and Taylor," in *Speaking Grief*, 197-216; Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman*, 131-137; Pritchard, *English Biography*, 14-19.

contrast, put good death narratives in a less prominent position among a variety of death and illness narratives. In this more private type of writing, away from the pressures of an immediate audience, writers had more choice about whether, and how, to compose a good death narrative. They could also use the good death script both biographically (to record others' deaths) and autobiographically (to record their own near-death experiences). This variety within a single source provides a broader context in which to analyze the historical reliability of good death narratives.

Good death narratives are fiction in the sense of being crafted, "the deliberate and creative shaping of fact."¹⁴ Though history has traditionally defined itself in opposition to fiction, the element of crafting in historical sources is inescapable.¹⁵ No matter how artistic, good death narratives were an integral feature of these women's writings and their portrayal of illness. The good death script was a useful literary tool in personal writings. It was a familiar way of establishing a person's virtuous character, which these women wished to do for select family members and friends whose posthumous reputations could support their own. How this affected the portrayal of illness varies; the line between script and experience can be indistinguishable in some cases, while in others the process of composition was long and complex. In either case, the good death script played an important role in the preservation of illness details. As Lady Halkett's writings show, good death narratives and illness narratives were subject to the same limitations.

The good death script in personal writings

These three women used good death narratives far too selectively to support the

¹⁴ Anderson, *Biographical Truth*, 2; cf. Kate Gartner Frost, *Holy Delight: Typology, Numerology, and Autobiography in Donne's Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 22.

¹⁵ Peter Burke, "History of Events and the Revival of Narrative," in *New Perspectives*, 284-285. On the good death specifically, see Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 211-212; Martin, *Walton's Lives*, 44-48.

assumption that the script was mandatory. Death is probably the most common event they recorded, yet only a quarter of their death narratives contain good death scenes.¹⁶ Limited use was clearly a choice, rather than an indication that the good death had fallen into disuse; there is no doubt that the women considered a good death an important achievement. The good death narratives they did include are evidence that they and their audiences were well-versed in the conventions of the script. The women could use the script at length, or rely on allusion and inference in more condensed passages, depending on what best suited the immediate context. Their selective use of the script indicates that it was not always necessary, in personal writings, to record a good death.

As with thanksgiving, the conventional influences need to be established first. Devotional manuals on the art of dying were one important source.¹⁷ Such works, drawing on a long tradition from the medieval period, urged ongoing preparation for the future ordeal of death. Although scholars have emphasized how demanding the art of dying was, especially after the Protestant Reformation eliminated purgatory and curtailed clerical and sacramental support at the deathbed, its familiarity and flexibility should also be considered.¹⁸ Jeremy Taylor's classic work, *The Ryle and Exercises of Holy Dying*, explained the importance of preparation thus:

[I]t is a great art to die well, and to be learned by men in health...by those whose understanding and acts of reason are not abated with fear or pains: ...All that a sick and dying man can do is but to exercise those virtues which he before acquired, and to perfect that repentance which was begun more early.¹⁹

¹⁶ More than 100 separate incidents can be found throughout their collective writings, roughly half of them family-related and the rest divided between friends and strangers. (This count does not include collective fatalities from epidemics, battles, or shipwrecks which the women also mention; proportions are based on the total and do not apply to the women individually.)

¹⁷ For surveys of key devotional manuals, see Beaty, *Craft of Dying*; Houlbrooke, "Puritan Death-bed," 123-126; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, ch. 6.

¹⁸ Houlbrooke, "Puritan Death-bed," 122-124; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 154-155; cf. 157-165; Porter and Porter, *Sickness and Health*, 247; Martin, *Walton's Lives*, 136-137.

¹⁹ Jeremy Taylor, *The Ryle and Exercises of Holy Dying* (London: Printed for R. R., 1651), "Epistle Dedicatory." On preparation for death generally, see Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, ch. 3. On *Holy Dying's* popularity and literary reputation, see Beaty, *Craft of Dying*, 197-207; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*,

Preparation focused on a set of “virtues” that had changed little despite the Reformation. Those which Taylor had in mind were the same that the medieval *Ars moriendi* had stressed two centuries earlier: patience, faith, repentance, charity and justice.²⁰ The virtues were a convenient shorthand for the dying person’s responsibilities, not only because they were well-known but also because each virtue could be enacted in a variety of ways. However difficult the art of dying was to practice, it made writing good death narratives a comparatively easy task.

The other major influence on these women’s use of the good death script was funeral sermons. Good death narratives were customary at the close of funeral sermons, the focal point of a brief biography of the deceased. In this context, the good death narrative was a carefully-designed illustration that both commemorated the deceased and exhorted survivors to consider their own end.²¹ The combination of commemoration with exhortation was essential because, while respectful commemoration basically required a good death narrative, whether eulogistic praise of an individual was appropriate in a sermon was a contested point in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.²² Technically, this tension between decorum and honesty was limited to the pulpit; however, it also influenced printed biographies, which were closely related to funeral

165; John Spurr, “Taylor, Jeremy (bap. 1613, d. 1667),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27041>.

²⁰ Taylor, *Holy Dying*, esp. ch. 4, but see ch. 2-3 as well; cf. Beaty, *Craft of Dying*, 232-238. For the medieval portrayal of the deathbed virtues and their opposing temptations, see Beaty, *Craft of Dying*, 3-4; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 151; Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400-c.1580*, 2nd ed. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 316. Deathbed priorities are often listed as tasks rather than virtues to demonstrate: Wear, “Interfaces,” 237; Houlbrooke, “Puritan Death-bed,” 125; Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 152, 154-161. Hence the variety of perspectives on the script’s flexibility: Houlbrooke, “Puritan Death-bed,” 142; Wear, “Interfaces,” 243.

²¹ Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 311-319; Martin, *Walton’s Lives*, 21-24; Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman*, 121-125; Pritchard, *English Biography*, 16-17.

²² On the pressure of respect and decorum, see Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 211-212, 319-320; Martin, *Walton’s Lives*, 144-148; Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman*, 24. On the debate over what was appropriate in a sermon, see Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 296-297; Martin, *Walton’s Lives*, 11-14; Stanwood, “Consolatory Grief,” 198-199.

sermons.²³ The twin themes of commemoration and instruction are prominent in these women's good death narratives as well, but neither theme fully explains each woman's distinctive pattern of selection, as the following surveys will show.

Given the emphasis on family in personal writings, one would expect commemoration to be the dominant motivation for these women. This appears to be the case with Alice Thornton's numerous good death narratives, which she used to construct a hagiographic, defensive family history.²⁴ She wrote lengthy good death scenes for her father, sister, mother, youngest brother, and husband.²⁵ She also portrayed as good deaths the sudden death of her older brother and the deaths of four of her infant children, using her brother's preparedness and her babies' peacefulness to imply the requisite virtues.²⁶ One has to read closely to detect that Alice was not writing good death narratives simply as a matter of course. Her pattern of selection becomes apparent if her original *Booke of Remembrances* is compared with her expanded *First Booke of My Life*. In the first she recorded a wide range of family deaths, giving only a brief note of the date and circumstances.²⁷ In the second, she passed over more distant relations and in-laws to single out deaths in her natal family for expansion into full good death narratives.²⁸

Family commemoration fits the pattern of Alice's good death narratives, but it fails to explain either Lady Fanshawe's or Lady Halkett's use of good death narratives. Theirs display a more ambiguous mixture of commemoration and instruction. Though Lady Fanshawe was writing a defensive family history like Alice Thornton, instead of using good death narratives for

²³ Martin, *Walton's Lives*, ix-xiii, 30; Pritchard, *English Biography*, 17-19.

²⁴ Anselment, "Apology," 5-7; Howard, "Imagining Pain," 371; Cairns, "Exegesis of Experience," 58-63.

²⁵ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 19-26, 49-53, 100-117, 159-163, 173-174 nt. She also included good death scenes for an Irish orphan raised in the family, and for the family minister Mr. Daggett: *Ibid.*, 34-36, 206-208.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 57-68, 94-95, 124-125, 150-151, 166.

²⁷ Graham et al., *Her Own Life*, 152-153; contrast the lengthy account of her mother's death, 154-156.

²⁸ Death notices for other relatives lack good death narratives: Thornton, *Autobiography*, 53-55, 93.

that purpose she wrote eulogies – brief character sketches without death scenes.²⁹ The only good death narratives in her *Discourse*, for her mother and nine-year-old daughter, are fragmentary, brief, and peripheral to the main storyline.³⁰ In other places, the script is missing where one would expect to find it, such as at the deaths of her eldest son and her husband.³¹ Her comparative avoidance of good death narratives might seem to reflect changing attitudes toward the importance of the good death in post-Restoration England, but her travel anecdotes about poor deaths suggest otherwise.³² These sensational stories were exemplary, most of them involving religious aberrations such as a Protestant-turned-Catholic, a Jew, and an atheist.³³ Thus, the script (or at the very least its inverse) was still meaningful to Lady Fanshawe, but her application of it was more complex than Alice's.

Lady Halkett's good death narratives are also best described as exemplary. The two good death narratives in her *True Accountt* did involve relatives, but the *Accountt* as a whole demonstrates little interest in family commemoration.³⁴ Lady Halkett's *Meditations* show how much death's instructive potential engrossed her. There, too, commemoration took a secondary position to personal application, as was appropriate in the context of occasional meditation. "What Contemplation can bee more nesenary," she mused on the sudden death of a female relative, "then seriously to Consider our Mortality especially when there is dayly such Sad accidents to putt us in Mind of itt."³⁵ She recorded a wide range of deaths, from those of her two eldest children, to neighbours, to executions for witchcraft.³⁶ Still, not every death required a

²⁹ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 4r-11v.

³⁰ Ibid., 10r-v, 47v-48r.

³¹ Ibid., 52r, 107v-108r.

³² Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 174-175, 217-218, 371.

³³ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 39r, 65r, 65v-66r.

³⁴ Note the brief treatment of her parents' deaths and the lack of detail about her siblings.

³⁵ Halkett, NLS 6492.17, p. 40. The woman is unnamed but identified as a "daughter in Law of the family."

³⁶ The following references are a selection of examples. Family deaths: NLS 6491.6, p. 1-18; 6491.12, p. 52-56; and NLS 6492.33, p. 115-128. Good deaths of neighbours and friends: NLS 6493.11, p. 214-218; 6493.13, p. 225-228;

formal meditation, even when it occurred in the immediate family. The most notable omissions are the deaths of her two youngest children and her step-son.³⁷

In each of these cases, a motivation more specific than conventional commemoration or exhortation underlies these women's use of good or poor death narratives. Alice Thornton focused on her natal family because she was responding to an attack on her family's honour and using their good deaths to testify to her own virtue.³⁸ Lady Fanshawe's stories of poor deaths were also a way of defining her family's character. Her *Discourse* contains many hints that she was anxious to establish the family's and especially her husband's commitment to the Church of England, probably due to their long periods of residence in Catholic countries and their close associations with Catholics.³⁹ Lady Halkett's interest in exemplary deaths suited devotional writing, which in turn influenced how she used them in her *True Accountt*. In short, the strongest influence on the women's choice of good death narratives was their purpose for writing. Each fit the potentially overwhelming script into a role subordinate to their own design.

Creating a good death narrative

As well as influencing their selection of good death narratives, the women's purpose for writing influenced the process of composing them. Looking more closely at that process helps to answer the question of how to read the illness narratives within good death narratives. Many of the good death narratives in the women's autobiographical apologies were retellings of an earlier

6493.30, p. 276; 6493.33, p. 283-288. Executions: NLS 6492.29, p. 98-101; NLS 6497.59, p. 377.

³⁷ Lady Halkett mentioned the deaths of her youngest children months or years after they happened: NLS 6492.12, p. 11-13; NLS 6500.44, p. 327-328 and no. 60, p. 351-352. It is possible that these deaths were recorded more formally in notebooks that have not survived; note the eulogy on her sister in Cooper's biography, which is not in any of her extant manuscripts: C[oooper], *Life of Lady Halket*, 48.

³⁸ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 222 nt. Cf. Anselment, "Apology," 5-7; Lear, "Illness and Identity," 341.

³⁹ Davidson, "Fanshawe, Sir Richard." Both Sir Richard and Lady Fanshawe were pressured to convert to Catholicism at his death: H. C. Fanshawe, ed., *The Memoirs of Ann Lady Fanshawe, Wife of the Right Hon. Sir Richard Fanshawe, Bart., 1600-1672* (London: John Lane the Bodley Head, 1907), 563; Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 108v, 110v. Also, note Lady Fanshawe's emphasis on the use of Anglican services at family births and burials abroad (52r, 62v, 97v, 110r); see also the appendix to the *Discourse*, which contains a selection of prayers, a list of Sir Richard's chaplains, and a record of the births, christenings, and burials (if relevant) of most of her children (121r-123r).

version of the story, which did not always include a good death scene. In the handful of cases where multiple versions of the same death have survived, it is possible to compare them to see how the good death narrative took shape and how the story changed over time. The deaths of the women's husbands are one of the best examples for this purpose, given the importance of the event and its influence on each woman's writing circumstances. Between two and four versions for each death are extant, written either by the women or by other contemporaries. The comparison confirms that a good death narrative was an important part of commemoration, but it shows that there were many ways to write it – early, late, or even indirectly.

Lady Halkett used the good death script to record her husband's death almost immediately. Her meditation "upon the death of my Dearest S^r James Halkett who died upon Saturday morning betwixt eight & nine a clocke beeing Sept 24 1670" was composed soon after the event, perhaps within a week.⁴⁰ The meditation interspersed reflections on widowhood with an account of Sir James's last sickness and death and a eulogy on his character. Though it was not a formal good death narrative, it recorded the key features of a good death, including Sir James's patience during his sickness, his acceptance of death, his profession of faith, his struggle against doubts and his final peace. The informal structure of the meditation, following Lady Halkett's thoughts as she wrote, reveals her familiarity with the script. As there is no evidence that she revised the meditation later, this initial account appears to have been sufficient in her estimation. If she did include Sir James's death in her *True Accountt*, it was not altered substantially; the corresponding passage in her 1701 biography parallels the meditation.⁴¹

Thereafter, commemorating Sir James became a *memento mori* for Lady Halkett; his grave and

⁴⁰ Halkett, NLS 6492.33, p. 115-128. Note the title's uncharacteristic emphasis on the day of the week rather than the date; contrast the titles of NLS 6490.3, p. 1; 6490.33, p. 297; NLS 6491.6, p. 1; 6491.12, p. 52; and NLS 6492.12, p. 1.

⁴¹ C[ooper], *Life of Lady Halket*, 32-33. The relevant pages of the *True Accountt* are now missing.

the anniversaries of his death offered visual and temporal reminders of her own approaching death.⁴²

So far as we know, Lady Fanshawe never wrote a good death narrative for her husband, Sir Richard Fanshawe. Her account of his death in her *Discourse to My Son* only states the nature and duration of Sir Richard's sickness and the hour of his death.⁴³ The good death script is entirely absent, a curious omission in a manuscript often classified as Sir Richard's biography.⁴⁴ The explanation happens to be simple, but it lies outside the text: Lady Fanshawe had ensured that Sir Richard's funeral sermon was published the year after his death.⁴⁵ This did contain a good death narrative, emphasizing his self-control despite the formidable challenges of violent sickness, parting with family and friends, and dying as a Protestant in a Catholic country.⁴⁶ Seeing to the publication of the sermon corresponded to the other public commemorative projects Lady Fanshawe undertook, such as arranging a final resting place for Sir Richard's body and commissioning a suitable monument.⁴⁷ Presumably the funeral sermon was among the family papers to which she often referred her son, and she felt no need to repeat it.⁴⁸ Instead, she used her *Discourse* to supply additional details, giving particular attention to

⁴² Halkett, NLS 6492.6, p. v, vii; NLS 6493.12, p. 219-224; 6493.24, p. 267-268; 6493.43, p. 313-316; NLS 6494.6, p. 292-293; NLS 6497.30-31, p. 323-326; 6497.46, p. 350-352; NLS 6499.17, p. 24-25; NLS 6500.51, p. 335-337; 6500.58, p. 349-350; 6500.62, p. 353-354; NLS 6501.25, p. 214-215; 6501.52, p. 324-326; NLS 6502.19, p. 225; 6502.35, p. 266-267; 6502.61-62, p. 304-306; 6502.64, p. 308.

⁴³ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 107v-108r.

⁴⁴ Bottrall, *Phoenix*, 148-149; Pritchard, *English Biography*, 107; N. H. Keeble, "Obedient Subjects? The Loyal Self in Some Later Seventeenth-Century Royalist Women's Memoirs," in *Culture and Society in the Stuart Restoration: Literature, Drama, History*, ed. Gerald M. MacLean (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 213.

⁴⁵ Henry Bagshaw, *A Sermon Preacht in Madrid, July 4, 1666, s.n., Occasioned by the Sad and Much Lamented Death of his Late Excellency Sir Richard Fanshawe, Knight and Baronet, of his Majesties Most Honourable Privy Council, and his Ambassador in Ordinary to the Court* (London: Printed for G. Beadle and T. Collins, 1667), "Epistle Dedicatory." Lady Fanshawe mentioned the burial service and the sermon but not its publication (BLA 41161, 110r).

⁴⁶ Bagshaw, *Sermon Preacht in Madrid*, 22-23.

⁴⁷ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 119r-v. For other widows who supervised their husband's commemoration, see Thornton, *Autobiography*, 28; Powers-Beck, *Writing the Flesh: The Herbert Family Dialogue*, 20-23.

⁴⁸ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 46v-47r, 88r.

the burden of public and private responsibility that devolved on her in the midst of her grief.⁴⁹

Alice Thornton's treatment of her husband William Thornton's death, in contrast to the other women's, is characterized by repetition. She alone of the three women wrote a full-length good death narrative on the occasion. On its own, the narrative is unexceptional; it gives a detailed account of William's final illness, juxtaposing an account of his medical treatment with his concurrent preparations for death.⁵⁰ But Alice wrote it after a considerable length of time, as much as twenty-five years later.⁵¹ She also did not credit her sources, though she obviously relied on other witnesses. William had died away from home while Alice was too ill to travel. Her three previous accounts of his death made this circumstance clear, and, appropriately, they only described her own grief and illness at this "most tirrable losse that any poore woman could have."⁵² Here, the existence of three earlier versions of William's death makes the last, formal version more questionable. Even if it was factually reliable – and it probably was, since at least two close family members who had been present at William's deathbed were still living twenty-five years later – the good death narrative was evidently an afterthought.⁵³ One can only speculate on the reason for the delay: perhaps it was Alice's grief, or perhaps oral testimony to William's good death was initially sufficient.

All three of these examples illustrate how, as illness narratives, good death narratives present problems. The good death narrative for William Thornton highlights the issues of retrospect and second-hand evidence. Though the other two good death narratives were composed promptly by eyewitnesses (Lady Halkett and Sir Richard Fanshawe's chaplain), they

⁴⁹ Ibid., 108r-v, 110r.

⁵⁰ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 173-174 nt.

⁵¹ The good death narrative is in Alice's fourth manuscript, which is not dated. However, it contains references to her son's death in 1692: Ibid., 144, 232.

⁵² Ibid., 175. Compare Graham et al., *Her Own Life*, 160-163; Thornton, *Autobiography*, 172-176, 173 nt.

⁵³ The surviving witnesses included William's future son-in-law, Thomas Comber (d. 1699), who preached his funeral sermon (Ibid., 176); and William's brother-in-law John Denton (d. 1709).

were still shaped to fit a conventional pattern and thus filter the illness experience. All the same, it is essential to realize that without the good death narratives there are no illness details at all. Having written a meditation on Sir James's death, Lady Halkett concentrated on her own loss in subsequent anniversary meditations. Lady Fanshawe only named Sir Richard's illness in her *Discourse*, knowing others had described it. Alice Thornton focused on her illness rather than William's in her earliest passages on his death. These other ways of referring to their husbands' deaths omit the details of illness experience that historians are most keen to find. Whatever the drawbacks, the illness narrative was contingent on the good death narrative.

The reason for this lies in the script itself. Good death narratives included illness details because they provided supporting evidence of the good death; they showed how the dying person exercised the deathbed virtues. Details such as Sir James Halkett's weakness, his difficulty speaking, his pain, and his conflict with death emerged as a result of Lady Halkett's desire to mark his fortitude, his patience, his good confession of faith, and his quiet end.⁵⁴ Sir Richard Fanshawe's funeral sermon drew attention to the severity of his illness – "a fire raging within, and Physitians, as Executioners, without him" – to make his calmness, resignation, and resistance to Catholic pressure to convert all the more remarkable.⁵⁵ The fact that the illness details support the script does not mean, as some have suggested, that they lost their individual distinctiveness.⁵⁶ Instead, the generic ideal could be expressed in many ways. For example, all three men were said to have died with exemplary calmness, but this applied to a variety of physical conditions. Sir Richard "continued his senses to the last moment"; William Thornton was unconscious, "lieing as if he were in a sweete sleepe"; Sir James "wentt outt of the world

⁵⁴ Halkett, NLS 6492.33, p. 117-118, 121-123.

⁵⁵ Bagshaw, *Sermon Preacht in Madrid*, 22.

⁵⁶ Becker, "Absent Body," 252-256; cf. Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman*, 47; Anselment, *Realms of Apollo*, 17.

with as much Serenity as ever I saw any” – whether conscious or not, Lady Halkett did not explain.⁵⁷ Neither did conventional submission to God’s will deny the violence of Sir James’s and Sir Richard’s sicknesses; rather, the extremity of their conditions served as an important contrast to their resignation.⁵⁸ The script influenced what was selected for emphasis, but in so doing it also made space for each man’s distinct experience. Thus, like the script of thanksgiving, the good death script preserved rather than obliterated details.

**Appropriating the good death:
Good death and near-death narratives in Lady Halkett’s *True Accountt of My Life***

When the women wrote about their husbands’ deaths, the priorities of their self-presentation as widows countered and sometimes outweighed the importance of a good death narrative. Lady Halkett, by contrast, was able to tailor her use of good death narratives to her self-presentation in her *True Accountt of My Life*, creating an even more intricate example of the connection and its effect on illness narratives. Neither the good death nor the illness narratives have attracted much previous attention. Until recently, readers of the *Accountt* have focused on Lady Halkett’s three courtships and her use of “romance” as a genre for life-writing.⁵⁹ Her *Meditations* counter this tendency by making it clear that her so-called adventures during the Civil War were, to her, “unpareld misfortunes” that entailed life-long social, financial and even political troubles.⁶⁰ Her neglected good death and near-death narratives acquire new significance from this revised perspective; they substantiated her claims to unrequited loyalty and “injured Vertue.”⁶¹ Each of the near-death narratives draws on the good death narrative that precedes it,

⁵⁷ Fanshawe, *Memoirs*, 563; Thornton, *Autobiography*, 174 nt; Halkett, NLS 6492.33, p. 122.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 121-122; Bagshaw, *Sermon Preacht in Madrid*, 22-23.

⁵⁹ Shumaker, *English Autobiography*, 20, 60; Bottrall, *Phoenix*, 149-160; Jelinek, *Women’s Autobiography*, 29-31; Rose, *Gender and Heroism*, 77-83; (originally published in “Gender, Genre, and History,” 267-273); Ottway, “They Only Lived Twice,” 137-140; Kearns, “Fashioning Innocence”; Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender*, ch. 5, esp. p. 110.

⁶⁰ Halkett, NLS 6494.7, p. 294. Cf. Trill, “Lady Anne Halkett”; “Meditations”; *Lady Halkett: Self-Writings*.

⁶¹ Halkett, BLA 32376, 53v.

making the genuine deathbed scenes a model for Lady Halkett's conduct at the verge of death as well as a foil for her unexpected recoveries. Besides contributing to the vindication of her past character, they enabled her to address her current troubles indirectly, and thus discretely.

The first good death narrative describes the death of Lady Halkett's brother, Will Murray, who died as a young man in 1649 shortly after King Charles I was executed.⁶² He had served the royal family till that point, as his parents had done before him; his final illness resulted from the emotional distress of being cast off in disgrace by the new king, the future Charles II.⁶³ Will's dramatic good death performance resolved his situation by proving his innocence and placing him beyond the comparatively petty concerns of court politics. From his sickbed, he sent for a minister willing to use the proscribed *Book of Common Prayer*, made a public confession of innocence, and reverently took the sacrament.⁶⁴ He forgave his enemies at court, telling his sister they were "his best freinds, for by there meanes hee Came to See the vanity of the world and to Seeke after the blesednese of that life w^{ch} is unchangeable."⁶⁵ Recalling his peace at the end, Lady Halkett remarked, "I beleeeve never any died more Composedly of a feaver in the strength of there youth."⁶⁶ In hindsight, she viewed his death as a welcome escape, an "injury" that "Contributed through the mercy of God to his etternall Good."⁶⁷

This good death narrative is full of contrasts: confessing innocence, thanking enemies, evil producing good, and emotional illness turning to good death. It cannot be a coincidence that

⁶² Ibid., 17r-18v. For the event's proximity to the king's death, see 16r.

⁶³ Cf. Halkett, BLA 32376, 35v. On the Murray family's various positions in the royal household, see Halkett BLA 32376, 1r-v, 35v; also R. Malcolm Smuts, "Murray, Thomas (1564–1623)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19648>; David Stevenson, "Halkett, Anne, Lady Halkett (1623–1699)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11934>; Joseph Bampfield, *Colonel Joseph Bampfield's Apology "Written by Himself and Printed at His Desire" 1685; And Bampfield's Later Career: A Biographical Supplement*, ed. John Loftis and Paul H. Hardacre (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1993), 76.

⁶⁴ Loftis explains the prayer book connection: *Memoirs*, 197, nt. 30:21.

⁶⁵ Halkett, BLA 32376, 18r.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 18 r.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 17v.

the same contrasts reappear in Lady Halkett's two subsequent near-death experiences.⁶⁸ Both were caused by emotional crises during her disastrous engagement to Colonel Joseph Bampffield, a Royalist secret agent. The first time, just as Will collapsed under the emotional trauma of sudden disgrace, Lady Halkett found "all the Relligion & vertue I had" overwhelmed by an onslaught of bad news.⁶⁹ Not only was her fiancé in prison and likely to be executed, but reports were circulating that his first wife was still living. Lady Halkett "fell so extreamely Sicke that none expected Life for mee." Echoing her brother, she used imminent death to clear herself of contemplating a bigamous marriage and even sought help for Bampffield, the source of her disgrace. With the family chaplain's assistance, she composed herself for a death that she "expected as the greatest Good." The second time, indecision about whether to see Bampffield caused an overwhelming "Conflict betwixt Love & honor" which produced "so great a distemper that I expected now an end to all my Misfortunes."⁷⁰ Once again, death seemed preferable, but she resigned herself to God's will and to "y^e trialls" of her illness. Rhetorically, Lady Halkett's miraculous but reluctant recoveries served as double vindication of her innocence. She could welcome death with a clear conscience, but God favoured her by delivering her from death.

The second good death narrative in Lady Halkett's *Accountt* also involved a tragically young death, caused this time by physical rather than emotional trauma. Lady Halkett's friend and housemate, Lady Moray, died in childbirth in 1653, unable to deliver the child and in so much pain that "she earnestly desired death many houres before itt Came."⁷¹ Earlier, Lady Halkett had praised her character, "devoutly Good...& of a Constant cheerefull humour."⁷² Her final hours were in keeping with this praise, marked by "patience...as great as was imaginable

⁶⁸ Ibid., 19r-20r, 38v.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 19v.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 38v.

⁷¹ Ibid., 47v.

⁷² Ibid., 45v.

for any to have upon y^e Racke.” Her husband, Sir Robert, supported her by sitting “constantly upon her bed Side feeling her pulce & exhorting her cheerefully to indure those momentts of paine w^{ch} would soone bee changed to everLasting pleasure.”⁷³ Within a few months of Lady Moray’s death, Lady Halkett found herself undergoing a similar ordeal. After a whirlwind journey to warn a fellow royalist of imminent arrest, Lady Halkett “tooke the Sodainest & the most violentt bloudy fluxe...w^{ch} brought me so weake in ten days time y^t none Saw mee that expected life for mee.”⁷⁴ Just as medical means failed in Lady Moray’s case, there were no physicians in the vicinity to assist Lady Halkett. Her “violentt paine...was in y^t extreamitty that I never felt any thing exceed itt,” so that while she welcomed death as “an end to all my troubles” she still “beged some releefe” from the pain. Lady Halkett’s endeavour to bear physical extremity and pain with patience echoed Lady Moray’s example, which made her recovery a contrast to the other’s fate.

Lady Halkett was doing more with these good death narratives than off-setting her remarkable recoveries: she was also responding to her precarious social situation in 1677-78. By representing what she could not say directly, each of the two death scenes contributed to her claim that her current social and financial troubles were the price of loyalty.⁷⁵ Will’s disgrace and death, long-forgotten and therefore safe, allowed her to complain about the Restoration regime’s paltry restitution to its supporters. His experience, “an ill requittall for many yeares faithfull Service & much hardship,” paralleled her own.⁷⁶ Though she retained royal favour, she was never able to recover the assets she lost as a Royalist during the Civil Wars.⁷⁷ The royal

⁷³ Ibid., 47v.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 50v.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 15r, 35v.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 17r.

⁷⁷ C[oooper], *Life of Lady Halket*, 30-31. On her unsuccessful suit in 1661, see Halkett, NLS 6491.10, p. 43-48; 6491.14, p. 63-65. She still hoped to regain some of her assets after Sir James’s death in 1670 (NLS 6492.11, p. xviii-xix).

brothers only gave her token gifts, little more than “a handsome refusall...for many yeares Suffering and expectation of redrese.”⁷⁸ She struggled with debt to the end of her life.⁷⁹ Will’s death scene also shifted attention away from Colonel Bampfield at a crucial point in Lady Halkett’s narrative. Bampfield, who had been the source of Will’s disgrace in 1649, had later become a double agent and was living in exile when Lady Halkett was writing.⁸⁰ She could not avoid mentioning him, given their unfortunate engagement and the fact that most of her royalist activity had involved assisting him.⁸¹ But she shrewdly substituted her brother’s dismissal and good death instead of detailing Bampfield’s concurrent fall from favour, thereby evading the question of his political reputation.

Lady Moray’s good death also addressed the theme of unrequited service, though from a different angle. While Will’s story conveyed personal vindication and an indictment of the Restoration court, Lady Moray’s death depicted the necessary counterpart, resignation to God’s will. The connection is clearer in Lady Halkett’s *Meditations*, where an earlier version of Lady Moray’s death appeared in an entry “upon the Death of S^r Robert Moray who died Sodainly in June 1673.”⁸² Originally, Lady Halkett was defending Sir Robert against the stigma of sudden death after an unsuccessful career.⁸³ She recalled his “Great Submission under the greatest of Trialls” at his wife’s deathbed as evidence that “his life was a Continued preparation for death:”

hee that thus could beeaere such a stroake Could undouptly incounter any other affliction or Calamity because hee had a Will wholly Subjected to his Maker &

⁷⁸ Halkett, NLS 6491.10, p. 43.

⁷⁹ NLS 6502.59, p. 300-301; cf. C[ooper], *Life of Lady Halket*, 52.

⁸⁰ See John Loftis’s explanation of the affair in Bampfield, *Apology*, 132-136. On Bampfield’s subsequent activities, see his version of events in *Apology*, as well as Alan Marshall, “Bampfield, Joseph (1622–1685),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1259>.

⁸¹ Her greatest feat, helping the Duke of York to escape from London in 1648, was entirely Bampfield’s project. Halkett, BLA 32376, 12v-14v; cf. Bampfield, *Apology*, 69-70.

⁸² Halkett, NLS 6493.11, p. 214-218.

⁸³ On the negative implications of sudden death, see Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 208-210; Wear, “Interfaces,” 238-240.

therefore knew nott how to bee disconted att what ever hee thought fitt to doe.⁸⁴

The self-discipline that Lady Halkett idealized in her portraits of Sir Robert and Lady Moray was a virtue that she herself sought to exercise in her own experiences of loss and suffering, whether physical or political.⁸⁵ Their joint example in the *True Accountt* set the right tone while enabling Lady Halkett to avoid indecorous self-praise.

The portrayal of illness in the *True Accountt* is therefore shaped by the apologetic messages of self-vindication, protest, and resignation that Lady Halkett was trying to communicate. Out of context, her illness narratives are liable to misunderstanding. The dispassionate tone of the good death narratives, for example, seems callous by modern standards. Lady Halkett sounds heartless introducing her brother's death by thanking God for "y^e Sattisfaction to See him dye as a good Christian" and focusing on Sir Robert's composure while his wife was dying in excruciating pain.⁸⁶ Readers familiar with the good death script, however, can recognize the cultural values Lady Halkett was expressing and detect the connection to her themes of vindication and resignation. Connecting script and context is also essential for interpreting the near-death narratives. The calm confidence, even anticipation, with which Lady Halkett faced death comes across as exaggerated – a classic example of how the good death script gets its reputation for fiction. But the confidence, too, was a rhetorical pose for the specifically apologetic context of the *Accountt*. Near-death experiences in Lady Halkett's *Meditations* show the other side of the good death. The experience of peace and confidence was only a brief ecstasy after a long debate with fear, and resignation easily gave way to new waves of doubt and temptation in life's ongoing cycle of trial and mercy.⁸⁷ This was still the good

⁸⁴ Halkett, NLS 6493.11, p. 215, 218.

⁸⁵ See for example Halkett, BLA 32376, 20r; Halkett, NLS 6490.33, p. 312-318.

⁸⁶ Halkett, BLA 32376, 17v.

⁸⁷ See especially Halkett, NLS 6490.33, p. 297-324 (read in light of preceding meditations on the fear of death: no.

death, but presented in a devotional context more concerned with the struggle than the outcome.

Conclusion

Good death narratives are a valuable source for the history of medicine, provided they are read with due attention to both convention and immediate context. Though they cannot be read in the same manner as less scripted illness narratives, they need not be rejected for their elaborate crafting. Critical literary perspectives on good death narratives have drawn attention to a creative element that the history of medicine is, in fact, well-positioned to navigate. Scholars of early modern illness experience are interested in physical details, a key aspect of the good death that seventeenth-century narrators also wanted to emphasize. What influenced these narrators was a combination of religious and social conventions with more specific concerns deriving from individual writing contexts. With these two shaping forces in mind, it is possible to locate historically useful illness details in good death narratives despite the script's uniform pattern.

The religious and social conventions of the good death have already been well canvassed. Individual purpose for writing, on the other hand, is more difficult to generalize. To some extent it must remain a case-by-case analysis. That said, some of the techniques identified in this chapter apply to all three women and could therefore have a broader application. One is the appropriation of good death narratives in an autobiographical context. Lady Halkett's integration of good death and near-death narratives with her overall apologetic message in her *True Accountt* is a more striking example of a technique the other two women also employed. Both Lady Fanshawe and Alice Thornton used good (and poor) death narratives to support their own self-portrait. Likewise, they used the good death script for near-death experiences, and in a way that supports a distinction in the portrayal of illness between apologetic and devotional

3, p. 1-9; no. 16, p. 112-117; no. 29, p. 245-264); NLS 6492.12, p. 1-15. Other references to Lady Halkett's apprehension of death in childbirth can also be found in NLS 6489.9.2, p. 257-259; NLS 6491.13, p. 57-62; 6491.51.3, p. 300-305; 6491.51.6, p. 319.

writing. Lady Fanshawe's relatively impassive narratives resemble Lady Halkett's *Accountt*, where calm confidence dominates the experience. Alice Thornton's near-death accounts, by contrast, alternate between confidence and anxiety, more like Lady Halkett's *Meditations*.

The good death script, like the script of thanksgiving, was integral to these women's illness narratives and to their larger life narratives. In contrast to thanksgiving, however, the dominance of the good death script has been overestimated. Despite scholars' concerns about the cultural obligation to portray all deaths well, in personal writings the use of good death narratives was deliberate and did not extend to all deaths. The contrast between the necessity of thanksgiving and the selective use of good death narratives is interesting, because it is limited to the conventions of writing. In seventeenth-century culture, thanksgiving and dying well were equally important, but one depended on writing while the other was primarily acted and spoken and only secondarily written.

CHAPTER THREE

“Resolved to suffer...y^e stormes and flowes of fortune”: The Script of Balance

The terse description of Sir Richard Fanshawe’s final illness and death in Lady Fanshawe’s *Discourse to My Son* is one of her most impassive illness narratives.¹ Neither a good death narrative nor a revelation of her own feelings, it is a good example of the selective emotional detachment for which her writing has been criticized.² Letters related to Sir Richard’s final months, however, provide some of the missing details. Correspondence between his fellow diplomats reveals that he was popularly believed to have died of disappointment caused by his recall as ambassador to Spain. “I fear he has taken something dearly to heart,” wrote one, and another commented, “[T]he vulgar say he broke his heart.”³ Since Lady Fanshawe presented Sir Richard as an ideally balanced man in the *Discourse*, it makes sense that she would avoid attributing his death to disappointment.⁴ But a little-known collection of her letters to Sir Richard a few months prior to his death shows that the case is more complex.⁵ She had kept silent in the *Discourse* about not just outside rumours but even her own premonitions. The affectionate warnings in her letters comprise a medley of religious, philosophical, and humoral advice urging him to maintain emotional balance and thereby protect his health. Though the advice apparently failed, the contrast between the concern in these letters and the reserve in the *Discourse* invites a re-evaluation of Lady Fanshawe’s depiction of illness in light of the role resignation played in her writing strategy.

¹ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 107v-108r.

² Rose, *Gender and Heroism*, 67, 70; Helen Wilcox, “Private Writing and Public Function: Autobiographical Texts by Renaissance Englishwomen,” in *Gloriana’s Face: Women, Public and Private, in the English Renaissance*, ed. S. P. Cerasano and Marion Wynne-Davies (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1992), 58-59; Becker, “Absent Body,” 254-255; Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender*, 101-104; contrast Jelinek, *Women’s Autobiography*, 26.

³ Sir Robert Southwell to Lord Arlington, 22 June 1666; Mr. Humphrey Colston to Mr. Joseph Williamson, 6 July 1666, in Fanshawe, *Memoirs*, 563-564.

⁴ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 3r-4r.

⁵ The letters were accidentally preserved among Sir Richard’s official correspondence: Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Heathcote Manuscripts*, xxvi, 224-232, 234-236, 239-240.

The early modern script of balance, or moderation, recurs throughout these different perspectives on Sir Richard's death, whether in Lady Fanshawe's anxiety, popular rumours, or the carefully crafted image of the *Discourse*. The incident highlights a disparity between the ideal the script promoted and the experience of extremes that it could not prevent. This tension involved spiritual as well as emotional and physical aspects of balance. Historians have focused primarily on the emotional and physical aspects, overlooking the religious element that also permeated the script of balance in early modern thinking. It is in the language of religious resignation that the tension between ideal and extremes is most glaring, sometimes to the point of appearing to deny reality. In her letters, Lady Fanshawe's urging Sir Richard to submit to God's will was essentially a preventative measure against overwhelming disappointment and melancholy; yet despite the appearances of his death, her *Discourse* still presented him as a model of "perfect resignation to Gods will."⁶ Reading resignation language within the larger script of balance, where a shared ideal blended theology, philosophy and humoral theory, not only explains how early modern people could harmonize the ideal of balance with their experience of extremes but also exposes how differently they experienced and described illness.

The importance of humoral and emotional balance and the relationship between the two aspects in the early modern conception of health is already a well-established topic. The humoral system centered on maintaining proportions among the four humours, as well as the internal and external factors that influenced them.⁷ Of these factors, the emotions were

⁶ See especially her letter of 24 Jan/3 Feb 1666, *Ibid.*, 228. Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 4r.

⁷ The four humours (blood, phlegm, black and yellow bile) corresponded to the four basic elements of the sublunary world (air, water, earth and fire). Humoral proportions were affected by the six "non-naturals": air, diet, sleep, physical activity, evacuation, and the passions or emotions. Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 37-39, 156, 166-167; MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 182-183, 186-187; Anselment, *Realms of Apollo*, 31-34; Ulinka Rublack, "Fluxes: the Early Modern Body and the Emotions," trans. Pamela Selwyn, *History Workshop Journal* 53 (2002): 1-4; Séverine Pilloud and Micheline Louis-Courvoisier, "The Intimate Experience of the Body in the Eighteenth Century: Between Interiority and Exteriority," *Medical History* 47, no. 4 (2003): 457-462.

considered especially potent and difficult to control. Pioneering studies in the history of illness experience such as Michael MacDonald's *Mystical Bedlam* and Barbara Duden's *Woman beneath the Skin* dramatically illustrated the direct physical effects emotional imbalances were believed to have in the early modern period.⁸ More recently, the emotions have been scrutinized as scholars have discussed the extent to which emotional experience and expression were culturally dependent.⁹ Altogether, these studies demonstrate that early modern people connected physical and emotional experience using explanatory frameworks that were radically different from today's preconceptions.¹⁰

Lady Fanshawe's writings, along with Lady Halkett's and Alice Thornton's, assume that religious beliefs played a key role in maintaining emotional and humoral balance. Religion, however, has been marginalized in scholarly discussions of the mind-body connection, partly due to approach, and partly as a result of the type of evidence being used. In the history of medicine

⁸ MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, esp. ch. 3-5; Barbara Duden, *The Woman beneath the Skin: A Doctor's Patients in Eighteenth-century Germany*, trans. Thomas Dunlap (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), ch. 4. See also Rublack, "Fluxes."; Philip Rieder, "Patients and Words: A Lay Medical Culture?," in *Framing and Imagining Disease*, 219-221; Pilloud and Louis-Courvoisier, "Intimate Experience," 471-472; Lisa Smith, "'An Account of an Unaccountable Distemper': The Experience of Pain in Early Eighteenth-Century England and France," *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41, no. 4 (2008): 459-480; H. Roodenburg, "The Maternal Imagination: The Fears of Pregnant Women in Seventeenth-century Holland," *Journal of Social History* 21, no. 4 (1988): 701-716; Antonie Luyendijk-Elshout, "Of Masks and Mills: The Enlightened Doctor and His Frightened Patient," in *The Languages of Psyche: Mind and Body in Enlightenment Thought: Clark Library Lectures, 1985-1986*, ed. G. S. Rousseau (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 186-230. Compare discussions of seventeenth-century melancholy: Katharine Hodgkin, "Dionys Fitzherbert and the Anatomy of Madness," in *Voicing Women: Gender and Sexuality in Early Modern Writing*, ed. Kate Chedgozy, Melanie Hansen, and Suzanne Trill (Staffordshire: Keele University Press, 1996), 69-92; Marjory E. Lange, "Humorous Grief: Donne and Burton Read Melancholy," in *Speaking Grief*, 69-97; Jeremy Schmidt, "Melancholy and the Therapeutic Language of Moral Philosophy in Seventeenth-Century Thought," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 65, no. 4 (2004): 584-601.

⁹ See for example Linda A. Pollock, "Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England," *Historical Journal* 47, no. 3 (2004): 567-590; Joanna Bourke, "Fear and Anxiety: Writing about Emotion in Modern History," *History Workshop Journal* 55 (2003): 111-133; Fay Bound, "Writing the Self? Love and the Letter in England, c. 1660-c. 1760," *Literature and History* 11, no. 1 (2002): 1-19; Rublack, "Fluxes."; Margo Swiss and David A. Kent, eds., *Speaking Grief*, esp. the "Afterword" by Ralph Houlbrooke (p. 284-302); Wilson, "Perils of Early Modern Procreation"; Roodenburg, "Maternal Imagination."

¹⁰ The following studies discuss this interpretive challenge: Duden, *Woman beneath the Skin*; Barbara Duden, "History beneath the Skin," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 30 (1991): 174-190; Rieder, "Patients and Words"; Gillian Bennett, "Bosom Serpents and Alimentary Amphibians: A Language for Sickness," in *Illness and Healing Alternatives in Western Europe*, ed. Marijke Gijswijt-Hofstra, Hilary Marland, and Hans de Waardt (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), 224-242.

generally, religion has been distinguished from other responses to illness such as medicine or magic.¹¹ Given the focus on medicine, it is understandable that religion has been treated primarily as an area of contrast or conflict, in terms of both professional competition and interpretative framework. In mind-body studies more specifically, religion is almost entirely absent from the discussion because the type of sources being used have little religious content.¹² Studies on melancholy are an exception, since one of its definitions was religious anxiety; but here, too, medicine and religion are viewed as competing over the diagnosis and treatment of a notoriously protean condition.¹³ Although this supposed distinction between religion and medicine is now being re-evaluated in the context of early modern professional practice, its effect on the interpretation of individual illness experience has yet to be reconsidered.¹⁴

Personal illness narratives also reflect professional competition over territory and the authority to define illness, but equal consideration should be given to their tendency to blur physical, emotional and spiritual causes and effects. Though such mixing of explanatory frameworks in personal writings has not gone unnoticed, it tends to be treated as either symbolic or illogical.¹⁵ Thus, the traditional scholarship on providence and illness assumes a metaphorical relationship between an essentially physical experience and its many spiritual interpretations.¹⁶

¹¹ See especially Thomas, *Religion and Decline*, 9-17, 98-103, 179, 209-251; Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, ch. 6; Porter and Porter, *Sickness and Health*, ch. 10; Wear, "Puritan Perceptions"; Wear, "Beliefs and Medicine."

¹² These studies are often based on medical consultation letters or casebooks. Compare Rieder, "Patients and Words," and Pilloud and Louis-Courvoisier, "Intimate Experience," with Laurence Brockliss, "Consultation by Letter in Early Eighteenth-Century Paris: The Medical Practice of Etienne-Francois Geoffroy," in *French Medical Culture in the Nineteenth Century* (Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994), 105; Smith, "Experience of Pain," 462; Duden, *Woman beneath the Skin*, 38, 129.

¹³ MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 176-178, 198, 217-231; Hodgkin, "Dionys Fitzherbert"; Lange, "Humorous Grief"; Schmidt, "Melancholy."

¹⁴ See for example Grell and Cunningham, eds., *Religio Medici*; Lisa Smith, "Secrets of Place: The Medical Casebooks of Vivant-Augustin Ganiere, ca. 1745-1750," in *Secrets and Knowledge: Medicine, Science and Commerce (1500-1800)*, ed. E. Leong and A. Rankin (Aldershot: Ashgate, forthcoming 2011).

¹⁵ Wear, "Puritan Perceptions," 56; Beier, *Sufferers and Healers*, 204-205; Porter and Porter, *Sickness and Health*, 175.

¹⁶ Porter and Porter, *Sickness and Health*, 166, 175-176, 235; Wear, "Puritan Perceptions"; "Beliefs and Medicine". For the logic of the connection, see Goldberg, "Understanding of Sickness"; and McGee, *Godly Man*.

Parallels between sickness and sin or between Christ the physician of souls and the medical practitioner, these studies point out, are common sermon metaphors and not meant to be taken literally.¹⁷ Interpretations that do seem overly literal are then relegated to exceptional cases. Either they are explained as popular syncretism, encouraged by the availability of multiple resources in the medical marketplace, or they are attributed to the irregular beliefs of marginal religious groups.¹⁸

Whether metaphor or anomaly, these explanations privilege professional discourse and a model of increasing secularization among the elite, while ignoring an equally creditable lay perspective on illness experience.¹⁹ As devout Anglicans of gentry status with court connections, the women considered here were members of the orthodox elite and certainly not religious radicals. Yet many of their illness narratives elude any attempt to digest them into physical experience versus spiritual interpretation. Approaching this challenge in terms of a script of balance makes it possible to evaluate their eclectic perception of illness not as illogical syncretism but as a thoroughly respectable discourse predicated on a concept of order which synthesized God's providence and humoral theory. These women had a humoral understanding of balance and movement which extended into other areas of life, allowing a striking degree of overlap among physical, emotional and spiritual aspects of experience and, ultimately, reconciling the ideal of balance with the experience of extremes.

¹⁷ On medical metaphors in religious discourse see Harley, "Medical Metaphors"; cf. Wear, "Puritan Perceptions," 67-69; and "Beliefs and Medicine," 147-155.

¹⁸ On the increasing rift between elite and popular medicine in the early modern period, see MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 9-11; and Fissell, *Patients, Power, and the Poor*, 16-29, ch. 9. On the effect of radical religion, consider the example of Lady Anne Conway, an elite sufferer who turned to the Quakers at the end of her life: Sarah Hutton, "Of Physic and Philosophy: Anne Conway, F.M. van Helmont and Seventeenth-Century Medicine," in *Religio Medici*, 228-246; Anne Conway, *The Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and Their Friends, 1642-1684*, ed. Marjorie Hope Nicolson and Sarah Hutton, Rev. ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 411-413; Sarah E. Skwire, "Women, Writers, Sufferers: Anne Conway and An Collins," *Literature and Medicine* 18, no. 1 (1999): 1-12.

¹⁹ MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 10-11; Wear, "Puritan Perceptions," 75-76; contrast Robin Briggs, "Embattled Faiths: Religion and Natural Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century," in *Early Modern Europe: An Oxford History*, ed. Evan Cameron (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 182.

The script of balance and a “humoral” Providence

Lady Fanshawe’s letters to Sir Richard illuminate her *Discourse* on several points, including her solicitude about the family’s health – especially Sir Richard’s. The letters were written during his absence in Portugal in early 1666, at a time when his embassy to Spain was mired in uncertainties and rumours were circulating that a new ambassador was being sent from England.²⁰ The correspondence shows that Lady Fanshawe was keenly aware of the stress this placed on her husband, as the looming disgrace and disappointment of recall compounded the typical frustrations of diplomacy. The wide range of advice and encouragement that she offered in response to the situation illustrates how the language of balance could create a common ground among spiritual, mental, and physical aspects of well-being.

Two messages reiterated in Lady Fanshawe’s consolatory advice betray her dominant concern for Sir Richard’s health. One of these messages was her “perpetual prayers” for his success and safety: “God in heaven bless thy business and send it a prosperous end if it be his will, and keep thee in health and send thee well back to me.”²¹ Prayers such as this, though formulaic, were the heartfelt refrain of her letters.²² Coupled with her prayers was another message urging Sir Richard to stay “cheerful.” “Dear love, have a care of thyself and be cheerful, and so God preserve thee,” she wrote in one letter, and in another

be cheerful, make much of thyself, be not surprised either with their want of their former kindness...nor be not too thoughtful, but do the best that in thee lies for God’s glory, for thy country’s good and thy own honour and profit, and then submit cheerfully to God’s decrees, who...hath delivered us out of many dangers and chooses for us such good things as we neither had foresight nor power to choose.²³

²⁰ For details of Sir Richard’s recall as ambassador to Spain, see Davidson, “Fanshawe, Sir Richard”; Fanshawe, *Memoirs*, 558-561; Loftis, *Memoirs*, 291.

²¹ Lady Fanshawe to Sir Richard, 24 Jan/3 Feb 1666, *Heathcote Manuscripts*, 229. On her “perpetual prayers,” see the letters from 18/28 Jan, 31 Jan/10 Feb, and 2/12 Feb: *Ibid.*, 227, 231, 234.

²² One of her last letters admits “how many fears and hopes I have daily and what disorder of mind I am often in” while waiting for news of his return (9/19 Feb 1666, *Ibid.*, 235).

²³ Lady Fanshawe to Sir Richard, 9/19 Feb 1666 and 24 Jan/3 Feb 1666; see also 18/28 Jan 1666 and 31 Jan/10 Feb

Cheerfulness was a term with broader connotations in the seventeenth century than today, perhaps best summarized by its being opposite to melancholy and thus its antidote.²⁴ As the passages in Lady Fanshawe's letters illustrate, cheerfulness extended well beyond emotional feeling into religious resignation and physical health. It was a mental strategy ("be cheerful, make much of thyself, be not surprised"), but also a spiritual attitude ("submit cheerfully to God's decrees") and the surest guarantee of Sir Richard's safe return ("have a care of thyself and be cheerful, and so God preserve thee").

Lady Fanshawe's apprehensions on her husband's behalf were not unusual. The danger of emotional imbalance was a genuine concern in the early modern period. According to humoral theory, excessive emotion could precipitate illness or even death by upsetting the body's humoral balance.²⁵ All three women reported multiple instances of illness either anticipated or experienced as a result of emotional distress. In some cases emotional shock was perceived as the direct cause of an illness. Grief made Lady Fanshawe and Alice Thornton ill on more than one occasion, while Lady Halkett collapsed twice during emotional crises in her relationship with Colonel Bampfield.²⁶ Sudden frights also upset Lady Halkett and worried Alice Thornton when she was pregnant.²⁷ Besides causing illness, emotional shocks could complicate and prolong an existing illness.²⁸ Even for those in good health, emotional shocks had insidious effects such as inducing melancholy and paving the way for fatal illness. Lady Halkett worried

1666. Ibid., 224, 226-227, 228, 231.

²⁴ Schmidt, "Melancholy," 595; Lange, "Humorous Grief," 89-90. Compare John Donne's use of cheerfulness as a theme in his eulogy for Magdalen Herbert Danvers: *A Sermon of Commemoration of the Lady Däuers, late Wife of Sr. John Däuers* (London: Printed by I. H. for Philemon Stephens, and Christopher Meredith, 1627), 126-170.

²⁵ MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 181-183; Duden, *Woman beneath the Skin*, 140-149; Rublack, "Fluxes," 1-4; Pilloud and Louis-Courvoisier, "Intimate Experience," 471-472.

²⁶ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 52r, 119r; Thornton, *Autobiography*, 52, 149-150, 152-153, 173-175, 222 nt; Halkett, BLA 32376, 19v-20r, 38v.

²⁷ Halkett, NLS 6492.12, p. 1-3 and no. 21, p. 64-67; NLS 6497.8, p. 275-278 and no. 63, p. 388; NLS 6500.74, p. 375; Thornton, *Autobiography*, 136-138, 140, 140 nt; cf. 152-153, 266, where Alice attributes a miscarriage to grief.

²⁸ Ibid., 33, 92, 166-167.

about Sir James's disappointments in her *Meditations*, and considered his death evidence of "what effects Greefe and discontentt may have even upon the strongest & most vigourous Spiritt."²⁹ What happened to Sir Richard paralleled the fate of Lady Halkett's brother Will Murray, who also succumbed to a fever following a major disappointment in his public career.³⁰

These stories lend credence to Lady Fanshawe's anxiety and to the popular rumours about Sir Richard's death. They also demonstrate that balance was easier to recommend than to practice. Nowhere is this discrepancy between the ideal of balance and the experience of extremes more obvious than in the rhetoric of religious resignation, which Lady Fanshawe used liberally in both her letters and the *Discourse*. To all appearances, her advice to "submit cheerfully to God's decrees" failed either in practice or in outcome, yet even in retrospect it persisted unchanged. This jarring inconsistency is not uncommon in early modern illness narratives. Lady Fanshawe wrote of her eleven-year-old son's death from smallpox in 1659 that "it pleased God...he dyed, y^e grief of which made me miscary and caused a sickness of 3 weeks."³¹ Her initial acknowledgement of God's providence sits oddly with her illness from grief. Alice Thornton used a similar sequence of expressions about her husband's severe illness in 1665 and her consequent collapse from "a violent passion of grieve and sorrow." "[I]t seemed good to the Divine Providence to lay a very sad affliction upon Mr. Thornton and myselfe," she wrote, and her own illness was "the Lord's hand upon myselfe in such extreamity."³²

The strangest thing about this gap between ideal and experience, so obvious to the modern reader, is how little it seems to have troubled the women themselves. Scholarship on early modern illness experience often comments on the problem of religious resignation in the

²⁹ Halkett, NLS 6492.33, p. 117; cf. no. 12, p. 1-2.

³⁰ Fanshawe, *Memoirs*, 562-564; Halkett, BLA 32376, 17r-18v.

³¹ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 52r.

³² Thornton, *Autobiography*, 149.

context of suffering.³³ Expressions of resignation can seem inconsistent with people's true feelings, more likely to have been forced by their own and others' expectations of proper behaviour.³⁴ Such artificial resignation is deemed ineffective, only adding feelings of guilt for the sin of impatience to the pain and grief an individual was already enduring. However, these readings oversimplify the rhetoric of resignation by trying to take the conventional exhortations literally, thereby missing the ongoing dialogue between comfort and complaint that took place in these situations.³⁵ The "problem" of resignation language hinges on viewing the ideal (balance) and the experience (grief) as polar opposites. The women's unapologetic narration of these scenes, on the other hand, suggests that some other interpretation than the outright failure of the ideal or its performance was possible.

This is where the humoral aspect of balance plays an important role in the script. The same tension between an elusive ideal and tangible reality can be found in humoral theory. A perfect equilibrium of the humours was ideal but impossible. Instead, each individual's humours were uniquely proportioned, with one of the four dominating their temperament.³⁶ The vital importance of internal movement and the inevitability of fluctuations in the external environment made excess a constant danger.³⁷ Healthy balance was therefore not a static equilibrium but a process of moderating extremes, more of a cycle than an absolute state. Yet the precariousness of experience in no way diminished the guiding ideal of balance, which anchored the whole

³³ Macfarlane, *Josselin*, ch. 11; Porter and Porter, *Sickness and Health*, 235-237; Anselment, *Realms of Apollo*, 12-13; Raymond A. Anselment, "'The Wantt of health': An Early Eighteenth-Century Self-Portrait of Sickness," *Literature and Medicine* 15, no. 2 (1996): 225; Harley, "Theology of Affliction," 283-285; Lear, "Illness and Identity."

³⁴ Mendelson, "Stuart Women's Diaries," 197-198; Long, "Maternal Elegies," 159-161; cf. Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, ch. 8.

³⁵ Consolatory letters illustrate this dialogue well, especially when the response is also recorded, as in the digest of letters Alice Thornton received on her husband's death (Thornton, *Autobiography*, 253-255). On variety rather than coherence in consolatory messages, see Anselment, *Realms of Apollo*, 42-48.

³⁶ Wear, *Knowledge and Practice*, 37-38, 167; Lange, "Humourous Grief," 74.

³⁷ Duden, *Woman beneath the Skin*, ch. 4, esp. 107-109, 123-149; Rublack, "Fluxes," 1-4.

system of thought and prevented the fluidity of experience from degenerating into chaos.

The relationship between a guiding ideal and necessary motion was long familiar, and therefore readily translated into aspects of life beyond the humoral body. Joseph Hall's well-known adaptation of classical Stoicism for Christian use, *Heaven upon Earth* (1606), described perfect resignation, or "*Tranquillitie* of the mind," in similar terms of balanced movement.³⁸

First he depicted the tranquil mind as a smooth sea in calm weather. Recognizing the inevitability of disturbance, however, he switched the metaphor to one of balanced weights:

for not the evenest weights, but at their first putting into the balance somewhat sway both parts thereof, not without some shew of inequality, which yet after some little motion, settle themselves in a meete poyse. It is enough that after some sudden agitation, it can returne to it selfe, and rest it selfe at last in a resolved peace.³⁹

The truly temperate individual was to be identified by a characteristic, not a constant, balance:

The balances that are most ill matched in their unstedie motions come to an equalitie, but stay not at it. ...So then the calme minde must be settled in an habitual rest, not then firme when there is nothing to shake it, but then least shaken when it is most assayed.⁴⁰

The same relationship between balance and movement plays out in these women's life writings. The individuals whom they praised for modeling the ideal of balance were invariably dead – finished with life's motion, and no longer susceptible either to imbalance or to the dangers of stagnation. Lady Halkett's description of Sir Robert and Lady Moray's "cheerefullnese" in the face of great pain and loss, discussed in the previous chapter, is powerful precisely because it is a eulogy.⁴¹ Praise of an individual's moderation was common in early

³⁸ Joseph Hall, *HEAVEN vpon Earth, Or Of true Peace, and Tranquillitie of Minde*. (London: Printed by John Windet for Samuel Macham, and Matthew Cooke, 1606), 6-9. On Hall's connection to Stoicism, see Isabel Rivers, *Classical and Christian Ideas in English Renaissance Poetry: A Students' Guide* (Boston: G. Allen & Unwin, 1979), 46-47; Schmidt, "Melancholy," 591-592.

³⁹ Hall, *Heaven upon Earth*, 8-9.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 10-11.

⁴¹ Halkett, NLS 6493.11, p. 214-218.

modern eulogies and the biographies that derived from them.⁴² Alice Thornton, for example, recalled that her father “was of so exact a Temperature of Humours, that a Perfume exceeding all Compositions of Art, proceeded from his Body.”⁴³ At the same time, the women’s eulogies demonstrate that the abstract ideal was too static for daily life. Lady Fanshawe and Lady Halkett both praised their deceased husbands for moderation that, during their lifetimes, they had feared the men might not exercise.⁴⁴

For their own lives, which were still in process, the women used metaphors that combined balance with movement. Alice Thornton described the constant barrage of sickness she and her husband experienced during his final years using the image of buckets on a windlass:

like two bukettes in a well, it pleased God to deale with us; when the one was downe, the other was up; soe I beeing recruted, had my worke in the assistance of my deare husband, whoes offten and frequent relapses into his pallsie fell on him, to my abundant greife⁴⁵

The image of two buckets roped together was homely but reassuring. It underscored the conjugal bond Alice was anxious to affirm in her life-writing, and it also gave a positive twist to the hardships of illness. Just as a windlass could not function without a bucket at each end of the rope, it was also useless if it was not in motion, filling each bucket alternately. Lady Fanshawe used more violent images of balanced motion to represent her experiences. Her most frequent metaphor was that of a ship being “racked” in a storm, an experience she knew only too well.⁴⁶ After Sir Richard died, Lady Fanshawe described the adjustment to widowed life as a “rider” attempting “to quit his horse in a full carrier [career].”⁴⁷ These images captured both her desire

⁴² Cf. Lange, “Humourous Grief,” 86, 89-90.

⁴³ Comber, *Wandesforde Memoirs*, 2. The editor was skeptical; he goes on to say, “The Reader will consider for himself what Allowance he ought to make for the Affection of a Child.”

⁴⁴ Sir Richard: Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 3r-4r; cf. Historical Manuscripts Commission, *Heathcote Manuscripts*, 226-228. Sir James: Halkett, NLS 6492.33, p. 117-118; cf. NLS 6492.12, p. 1-2.

⁴⁵ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 168.

⁴⁶ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 17r; cf. 2v, 13v. On her literal experiences of shipwreck, see 27v-28v, 39v-40v.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 117v.

to maintain balance in the midst of life's chaotic movement, and her experience of imbalance: a ship that does not float, sinks, and a rider who cannot keep his seat will have a hard fall.

A humoral understanding of how the ideal of balance and the extremes of life functioned together therefore resolves the problem of religious resignation language “not working” by treating resignation as process toward a goal rather than a state of being. This change in perspective does not alter the role of God's providence, which still ordered what happened according to an inscrutable wisdom. However, it downplays the moral or spiritual blame that might be attached to a lapse into imbalance by treating it instead as an inevitable part of life's cycle of good and bad. It was sin only in the sense of imperfection, a limitation to which all of creation – what the old cosmology termed the sublunary world – was subject.⁴⁸ The breadth of the concept of balance easily allowed such an integration of humoral theory and theology, with significant results for illness narratives that had an emotional component.

More than metaphor: Illness and the script of balance in Lady Halkett's *Meditations*

The script of balance figures prominently in two of Lady Halkett's occasional meditations on near-death experiences. The first meditation was written “upon the birth of my son Robert,” Lady Halkett's third child, in early 1660.⁴⁹ The second was written almost eight years later, “upon the Great distemper I was in decem 1667.”⁵⁰ Though the circumstances and themes of each meditation are distinct, the illness narratives in both are strikingly similar. Lady Halkett herself noted the connection by referring back to the first experience when she wrote the second meditation.⁵¹ Each recounts a near-death experience in which Lady Halkett found unusual comfort in her faith and in her husband's prayers for her recovery. Deliverance from

⁴⁸ E. M. W. Tillyard, *The Elizabethan World Picture* (New York: MacMillan, 1943; reprint, New York: Vintage Books, n.d.), 38-39.

⁴⁹ Halkett, NLS 6490.33, p. 297-324.

⁵⁰ Halkett, NLS 6492.12, p. 1-15.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

death was off-set each time, however, by Lady Halkett's struggle with what she described as temptations from "the Divell." The two meditations, when read together, demonstrate how much emotional, physical and spiritual experience could blur in an illness narrative, making it impossible to treat the religious element as mere metaphor.

In each meditation, as Lady Halkett pondered her close brushes with death and recorded the mixture of gratitude, regret and new resolve that she felt upon recovery, she oriented her illness experience within the larger cycle of good and ill that characterized her life. Thanks to the reflective intent of devotional writing, the meditations explain at some length how this cycle worked. In the meditation after her son's birth, Lady Halkett noted how God's "mercys" enabled her to endure the "Croses" of life:

for though since ever I was old enough to know the world as a place of triall I have ever mett with Croses. yett they have beene so intermixed with mercys that, the one seemed to bee butt a preparation for the other. & while the crose Continued I was Suported under itt and that was as great mercy as to bee delivered from itt.⁵²

The second meditation took a more somber angle, as she observed the transience of happiness:

My Life hath beene nothing (ever Since I was Capable to observe itt) butt a Continuall interchangeable Condition betwixt Good & ill. if I had Content or Sattisfaction one time itt was soone allayed with Some trouble or discontent Succeeding itt.⁵³

And later:

Well doth the Psalmist advise to Rejoyce with Trembling for never had I reason in any thing either spirituall or Temporall to rejoyce in butt I had presentlyt affter some thing Succeeded to allay all the joy I could bee capable off⁵⁴

Though these passages used predominately religious language, they referred to more than her spiritual condition. The narrative sequence of the two meditations shows that they

⁵² Halkett, NLS 6490.33, p. 312-313.

⁵³ Halkett, NLS 6492.12, p. 1.

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 10-11.

encompassed the full breadth of her experience, including the physical and emotional as well as the spiritual. The events unfold in a cycle of ups and downs. The first half of the meditation on her childbirth experience presents a series of threats and deliverances in pairs. First, her overwhelming fear of death in childbirth was relieved not only by a last-minute deliverance from the fear but also by a safe delivery from pain and physical danger.⁵⁵ A few days later, she nearly died when “on a Sodaine my Spiritts failed.” This threat was averted by Sir James’s prayers; but then her renewed appreciation for Sir James contrasted with remembered failures in her duty to him.⁵⁶ The near-death experience was followed by “a very great temptation” from “the Divell,” for which she sought spiritual relief.⁵⁷ At some point during these other experiences, the family narrowly escaped a serious house-fire. The narration ends with more “troubles,” which Lady Halkett believed were meant “after these deliverances to Mitigate my Joy”; still, she appealed to the deliverances she had already received as grounds to hope for more.⁵⁸

The same pairing of danger and deliverance can be seen in the second meditation, on Lady Halkett’s “Great distemper,” though the narrative is less linear and interrupted regularly by passages of reflection. The family’s well-being had been disturbed “by an unexpected accident,” apparently the shipwreck of Sir James’s younger son, which upset Sir James to such an extent that Lady Halkett feared for his life.⁵⁹ At one point, she received “so great a fright...finding him as I suposed dead in the bed,” that she became ill herself. This, she reflected in retrospect, was a counterbalance to her unusual experience of peace and charity at a recent celebration of the sacrament.⁶⁰ The fright brought on a lengthy illness, during which she had two near-death

⁵⁵ Halkett, NLS 6490.33, p. 297-300.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 301-305.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 307-310.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 310-313.

⁵⁹ Halkett, NLS 6492.12, p. 1; cf. no. 13, p. 16-22 and no. 33, p. 119, 123.

⁶⁰ Halkett, NLS 6492.12, p. 1-3

experiences. Her survival, a deliverance in itself, was augmented by a profound sense of peace in the face of death and, once again, the good effect of Sir James's prayers on her behalf. As before, this provoked reflections on the blessing of a good husband versus her own failures to behave toward him as she ought.⁶¹ The near-death experiences were followed by another period of "horrid Temptations," no sooner relieved than "Continued paine...for a Month together day and Night" made Lady Halkett fearful that she would offend God by impatience.⁶² This meditation, like the earlier one, ends on a tentative note, but at least Lady Halkett could say that God had "in some measure restored mee to health."⁶³

Physical, mental and spiritual influences and outcomes intermingle to such an extent in these illness narratives that it becomes impossible to extract an exclusively physical experience from either. The physical details are vivid, but sparse; the narratives' chain of cause and effect relies equally on emotional and spiritual elements. For example, it is clear that Lady Halkett regarded her childbirth experience as a deliverance, but not just in the physical sense of birthing a child. It was also a deliverance from fear, of both death and pain, that had troubled her throughout the pregnancy.⁶⁴ Lady Halkett's relief stemmed from both the safe birth and the sense of spiritual confidence that preceded it. Should the nuances of meaning in the term "deliverance" be too familiar to excite notice, however, the second meditation forces the issue. The connection between emotional and physical conditions is explicit, in that Sir James's "discontent" and Lady Halkett's "fright" produced their physical symptoms. Lady Halkett's spiritual experiences also figure more insistently in the sequence of events, drawing the reader's attention to two points of integration that play a significant role in both meditations.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 3-9.

⁶² Ibid., p. 9-11.

⁶³ Ibid., p. 13.

⁶⁴ Halkett, NLS 6490.33, p. 297; cf. no. 1, p. 1-9; no. 16, p. 112-117; no. 29, p. 245-264.

One of these is the period of spiritual temptation that follows the near-death experiences in both meditations. Lady Halkett's "wrestling" and "strugglings" with temptations from "the Divell" are couched in familiar biblical phraseology, but it would be a mistake to regard them as exclusively spiritual experiences. In the first meditation, one might notice only the spiritual aspect because Lady Halkett distinguished that deliverance "as much beyond the other two" and used a sequence of paraphrased Bible passages to describe it (a common feature of her writing).⁶⁵ All the same, she explained that "my enemy tooke advantage from the distemper I was in by the melancholy vapours from the Spleen & Mother to make his designe worke the more strongly."⁶⁶ In the second meditation, the integration of spiritual and humoral experience is more developed:

I was nott Long free from the assaults of my great enemy the divell who offred horid Temptations...& great was the wresting that I had before the Lord was pleased to give mee a deliverance from his Sugestions. for as my desease was that w^{ch} is most Subject to feares & aprehensions, so the divell is allways watchfull of all oportunitties to make use even of our owne distempers to disturbe us. & the Lord by his wise providence permitts itt lest I should have beene lifted up above Measure att his gracious dealing with mee, therefore Sathan was Sentt to buffett mee to keepe mee humble.⁶⁷

Bible paraphrases are also prominent here, especially the allusion to St. Paul's thorn in the flesh, but this should not detract from the decidedly early modern causal sequence that Lady Halkett assumed.⁶⁸ Her "desease," earlier attributed to "vapours from the spleene" that had been "disturbed & raised" by her fright, provided an opening for the ever-lurking "divell," which God allowed in order to counterbalance the elevation of spirits following her deliverance from death.⁶⁹ Humoral, emotional, and spiritual imbalance were all at play in this experience of

⁶⁵ Halkett, NLS 6490.33, p. 307. The Bible passages Lady Halkett paraphrases are Prov. 18.14; Matt. 15.24, with Matt. 9.12 or one of its parallels (Mk. 2.17 or Lk. 5.31) implied; Heb. 13.20; I Pet. 5.8.

⁶⁶ Halkett, NLS 6490.33, p. 308.

⁶⁷ Halkett, NLS 6492.12, p. 9-10.

⁶⁸ The allusion is to 2 Corinthians 12.7: "And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." (KJV)

⁶⁹ Halkett, NLS 6492.12, p. 3.

temptation, which Lady Halkett kept firmly anchored in the context of her larger illness narrative.

The other point of integration is a phrase that Lady Halkett used repeatedly in the two meditations, “to Mitigate my Joy,” or “to allay that joy.” Alice Thornton used such expressions regularly as well.⁷⁰ It always followed some high point in the women’s experience, which could be spiritual (such as Lady Halkett’s experience at the sacrament or her peace in the face of death), material (such as the Halkett family’s prosperity), or physical (such as Lady Halkett’s escapes from death, and Alice Thornton’s nursing her children). Alice Thornton interpreted these checks to her “unbridled passion of joy” as God’s teaching her “not to sett my affection too much on things below, be they never so necessary or desireable.”⁷¹ Though the same interpretation as spiritual discipline is applied in Lady Halkett’s meditations – “how litle should wee value any thing in this life except itt bee that w^{ch} leads us to a better” – she also oriented the concept of moderating joy in the “Continuall interchangeable Condition betwixt Good & ill” which characterized her life.⁷² In this sense, divine checks functioned as the literal moderation of the emotions necessary for humoral health, and thus as “correction” in a restorative rather than punitive sense of the word. This fits the evidence better, because the moderated joy was never wrong in itself; the danger lay in excess, which could threaten spiritual and physical health alike.

On top of the challenge inherent in reading a religious meditation as an illness narrative, the blurring of physical, emotional and spiritual aspects in these narratives prevents a strictly physical interpretation. Instead, these two illness narratives must be read in light of the overall structure provided by the script of balance. It is easy to presume, for example, on the seeming familiarity of the childbirth scene in the first meditation and sideline the religious language as

⁷⁰ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 124, 141, 149, 166.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 141; cf. 90, 166, 172.

⁷² Halkett, NLS 6492.12, p. 1, 3.

only metaphorical. The narrative parallels with the second meditation and its less comprehensible sequence of events show, however, that Lady Halkett understood her experiences differently.⁷³ For her, both childbirth and fright-induced illness were a cycle of trials and deliverances that integrated mind, body and soul. Likewise, reducing her experience of “horid Temptations” to the seventeenth-century phenomenon of religious melancholy would miss her distinctive portrayal of the ordeal.⁷⁴ For her, these experiences happened in the context of deliverances from death; they were consistent enough that she could anticipate them (“I was nott Long free from the assaults of my great enemy the divell”). Instead of questioning whether her temptations were humoral *or* spiritual experiences – a question that has occupied much of the modern and early modern discussion of melancholy – she understood them in both senses.⁷⁵ They were part of the all-encompassing cycle of good and ill in her life.

“Resolved to suffer”: Ideal and experience in Lady Fanshawe’s *Discourse to My Son*

The script of balance also shaped Lady Fanshawe’s illness narratives, but without the self-explanation provided by Lady Halkett’s meditations. Lady Fanshawe’s illness narratives form a puzzling contrast to those of Alice Thornton or Lady Halkett, because they are so much less detailed in both medical and emotional content. Even where exceptional detail does draw attention to an incident, it is not always clear why Lady Fanshawe emphasized one experience rather than another. For example, there is a good death narrative for the Fanshawes’ eldest daughter, who died of smallpox when she was eight or nine, but not for their eldest son who died of the same disease when he was eleven.⁷⁶ Lady Fanshawe described a recurring fever that

⁷³ For a reading of early modern childbirth that is at considerable odds with Lady Halkett’s *Meditations*, see Wilson, “Perils of Early Modern Procreation.”

⁷⁴ See Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford: John Lichfield and James Short, 1621), 3.4.2.3; cf. Lange, “Humourous Grief,” 81-85, 90-94; MacDonald, *Mystical Bedlam*, 223.

⁷⁵ The tendency to place humoral and spiritual experience in tension can be seen in Hodgkin, “Dionys Fitzherbert”; Graham, “Women’s Writing,” 217-226.

⁷⁶ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 47v-48r, 52r.

afflicted her and Sir Richard for months, but gave few details about her eighteen pregnancies.⁷⁷ She paused her narrative to record circumstances surrounding the deaths of two slight acquaintances, but for the deaths of three young Fanshawe children and four newborns she only noted the event and burial location.⁷⁸ Many of Lady Fanshawe's readers have interpreted this lack of detail as evidence that Lady Fanshawe kept herself distant from the physical and emotional implications of her story. The strongest critics identify in this tendency "an inhibited, repressed story" and a "denial of...her own physicality."⁷⁹ Readers in general concur that the story of Lady Fanshawe's experience was muted by her idealization of husband and marriage.⁸⁰

Such evaluations express modern rather than early modern expectations of life writing and therefore mistake Lady Fanshawe's masterful self-portrait for lack of candour.⁸¹ A careful examination of her illness narratives and their place within the larger narrative reveals that the *Discourse* is marked by an alternation between emotional extremes of reserve and excess rather than a complete lack of expression. The reserve that characterizes illness narratives stands in marked contrast to the strong, almost flamboyant, expressions of joy and grief that distinguish other narratives in the *Discourse*. The key to Lady Fanshawe's depiction of these two extremes is to be found in the stoic philosophy that she and Sir Richard practiced together.⁸² Her

⁷⁷ Ibid., 48v-49r; for the count of Lady Fanshawe's pregnancies, see folio 8r and compare folios 121v-123r. The latter lists a fifth miscarriage, which would raise the count to nineteen pregnancies.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 30v, 39r; cf. 16r, 28v, 38r, 48v-49r, 54r, 62v.

⁷⁹ Rose, *Gender and Heroism*, 70; Becker, "Absent Body," 255.

⁸⁰ Shumaker, *English Autobiography*, 58, 65; Bottrall, *Phoenix*, 148; Delany, *British Autobiography*, 161-162; Loftis, *Memoirs*, ix; Sandra Findley and Elaine Hobby, "Seventeenth Century Women's Autobiography," in *1642: Literature and Power in the Seventeenth Century*, ed. Francis Barker et al. (Colchester: University of Essex, 1981), 22-26; Jelinek, *Women's Autobiography*, 26; Smith, *Poetics*, 88; Wilcox, "Private Writing," 50-51, 58-59.

⁸¹ For a different defense of Lady Fanshawe's skill as a writer, founded on this objection, see Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender*, ch. 4.

⁸² In social history, stoicism is usually described in contrast to Christian views, which is misleading in this case (see Houlbrooke, *Death, Religion and the Family*, 222-224; Porter and Porter, *Sickness and Health*, 237-240). The Fanshawes' "stoicism" was neither secular Stoicism nor Christian Neostoicism as formally defined; for definitions and variations of each, see Rivers, *Classical and Christian Ideas*, 44-53. It was, instead, an eclectic blend mediated through the popular advice literature of their time. Peter Davidson comments briefly on stoicism in Sir Richard's poetic translations (Boethius and Horace), pointing out that such messages were simply part of the literary repertoire

apparently inconsistent portrayal of illness experience is due to her use of the script of balance to depict both an ideal and the reality of her experience. The stoic slant of the *Discourse*, unnoticed by Lady Fanshawe's modern critics, is central to its message. It is one of the primary lessons Lady Fanshawe wished to convey to her son, not only through the idealized portrayal of his father but also through an account of the family's "misfortunes."⁸³ However, instructing her son was not her only purpose in writing; she also wrote to defend the Fanshawe family's decline in status, and here it was more effective to be emotionally expressive.

The script of balance is evident from the beginning of the *Discourse* in Lady Fanshawe's character sketches of Sir Richard and herself. Sir Richard appears as a model of balance, possessing among his many superlative qualities a sanguine temperament and a "perfect resignation to Gods will." These character strengths were manifest in his life-long commitment to the Church of England, a well-ordered household, and his conversation's quality as cheerful, peaceable, and "free from passion."⁸⁴ Lady Fanshawe's temperament emerges more gradually over the course of her narrative as passionate and extreme – the opposite of Sir Richard's. As a girl she was "wild," preferring "active pastimes" such as skipping, running, and riding to a young lady's staid activities.⁸⁵ As Sir Richard's wife, she attributed some of her bolder actions to "ye effect of y^t passion which I could never master."⁸⁶ The *Discourse* contains many scenes that contrast her own and her husband's characters. Enemy bullets made her run in fright, while Sir Richard reasoned that "it were as good to be kill'd walking as running."⁸⁷ A ghost in the night

of the day: *The Poems and Translations of Sir Richard Fanshawe*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 338-340. What Jeremy Schmidt labels "moral philosophy" (he ignores the religious component) is similar to the Fanshawes' stoicism ("Melancholy").

⁸³ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 2r.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 3r-4r.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 12r.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 36v.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 25r.

frightened her awake while Sir Richard slept undisturbed.⁸⁸ When Sir Richard was traveling captive to prison after the Battle of Worcester, Lady Fanshawe's tears contrasted with his cheerful resignation.⁸⁹

But although Lady Fanshawe was naturally passionate, she was also teachable – that is, willing to learn how to control her natural bent. This creates another contrast in the *Discourse* between her character and Sir Richard's. His was static, representing an ideal already achieved; hers was dynamic, striving toward the ideal in the midst of a different reality. Even before her marriage, Lady Fanshawe had given up her "beloved recreation" to assume the management of her father's household on her mother's death.⁹⁰ Her marriage presented many more tests of her ability to act as her role rather than her temperament dictated, and in these she had the assistance of Sir Richard's example and advice. In an intriguing inversion of the letters Lady Fanshawe wrote to Sir Richard during his embassy to Portugal, the *Discourse* records several occasions on which Sir Richard wrote similar advice to Lady Fanshawe. Once he wrote from aboard ship, awaiting a sea battle, to say that "if he should lose his life he advised me to patience."⁹¹ His letters on two other occasions, when the king's affairs called him away during Lady Fanshawe's confinements, contained the same message: be patient during their separation, take comfort in the company of family and friends, be hopeful and trust in God for a happy outcome.⁹²

Lady Fanshawe, it is plain, recognized the value of this advice. To her these letters contained "a thousand kind expressions," and "so much Love and reason y^t my heart melts to y^s day when I think of it."⁹³ Her admiration for Sir Richard's strength of character is also clear. Sir

⁸⁸ Ibid., 31r-v.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 45r.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 12r.

⁹¹ Ibid., 25v.

⁹² Ibid., 16r-v, 43v.

⁹³ Ibid., 43v, 25v-26r.

Richard's conduct at a farewell meeting en route to prison appropriately illustrated his own advice. He "was very cheerefull in appearance," Lady Fanshawe recalled, and encouraged his assembled friends, "y^s is y^e chance of war nothing venture nothing have; and so let us sett down and be merry whilst we may." He comforted Lady Fanshawe and entreated her, "[C]ease weeping no other thing upon earth can move me remember wee are all at God^s dispose."⁹⁴ The scene showcased Sir Richard's stoicism, and, when combined with his enforced retirement during the remaining years of the Interregnum, it communicated a portrait of his character that would have been readily recognized by Lady Fanshawe's readers, especially fellow Royalists.⁹⁵ To portray herself as learning from this model was the next best thing to exercising it herself.

Understanding and admiring the advice did little, however, to alter the emotional and physical strain of the extreme circumstances that Lady Fanshawe faced alone during her separations from Sir Richard. In the *Discourse*, the messages in his letters consistently contrast with her difficult situation. When Sir Richard left her behind in Oxford after the birth of their first child, though he wrote to encourage her, her health and spirits were seriously affected. The child died, and she herself "was 10 weeks before I could goe alone," in a "distressed Condition," "very weake" and "ready to perish," until she received the long-desired news that she could rejoin her husband.⁹⁶ Six years later she was again in similar circumstances, Sir Richard being obliged to follow the king to Scotland while she waited in London, pregnant and poor. Once more, Sir Richard's "kind expressions" and her own efforts "to arme myself" could do little to reduce her surprise at his change of plans, her fear and anxiety for his safety, or her "paine."⁹⁷

⁹⁴ Ibid., 45r.

⁹⁵ Rivers, *Classical and Christian Ideas*, 47; cf. Alan Rudrum, "Royalist Lyric," in *Cambridge Companion*, 192-193; Fanshawe, *Poems and Translations*, vol. 1, 339. On the familiarity of stoicism in the seventeenth century, see Reid Barbour, *English Epicures and Stoics: Ancient Legacies in Early Stuart Culture* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998).

⁹⁶ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 16r-17r.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 43v-44v.

These more candid passages provide interesting illness details – the two stories above, for example, contain important evidence of her childbearing experience – but they were also conscious literary constructions. It is difficult, if not impossible, to say anything specific about the births themselves. Though the narratives were based on concrete physical situations (the confinement and pain of childbearing, Sir Richard’s absence, the death of a child), other factors such as poverty, danger and anxiety about the future were equally involved. It is significant that Lady Fanshawe chose to express in these settings the emotional and physical distress she usually suppressed; there is a connection between Sir Richard’s absences and her more demonstrative behaviour, whether emotional vulnerability or brave action.⁹⁸ For the purposes of her *Discourse*, Lady Fanshawe’s most difficult childbirth experiences were those for which Sir Richard was absent. The illness details are therefore inextricable from the character portraits she was crafting.

Lady Fanshawe’s dual portrayal of herself as learning the virtue of resignation yet continuing to experience life’s cycle of extremes would have been highly plausible, even without the script of balance to harmonize the two. Her natural temperament and her female weakness were excuse enough for her lapses into emotional distress.⁹⁹ Against that background, her striving for the ideal could only be admirable. But the script of balance gave her *Discourse* additional flexibility because of its more gender-neutral ability to bridge opposites, especially in the scenes where Sir Richard’s and Lady Fanshawe’s roles blend or reverse. The points in her narrative where Sir Richard himself experienced strong emotion and thus acted out of character deserve special notice. Several are joint experiences involving Sir Richard and Lady Fanshawe together. When their eldest daughter died of smallpox they “both wished to have gone into y^e

⁹⁸ Others note the connection: Rose, *Gender and Heroism*, 68-69; Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender*, 100, 103.

⁹⁹ Mendelson, *Mental World*, 2; Graham et al., *Her Own Life*, 7-8; Graham, “Women’s Writing,” 220; Eales, *Women in Early Modern England*, 3.

grave with her.”¹⁰⁰ After narrowly escaping shipwreck on another occasion, both gave vent to their emotions but also mutually reinforced an attitude of resignation:

yⁿ we praised God I wept your father lifting up his hands admired so great a salvation yⁿ we often kissed each other as if yet we feared death sithed & complained of y^e cruelty of y^e Rebells y^t forced us to wander yⁿ we again comforted ourselves in y^e submitting to Gods will for his laws & our Country and remembered y^e Lott and present suffering of our King[.]¹⁰¹

In these examples Sir Richard’s emotion validated Lady Fanshawe’s, but in two other scenes his emotion contrasted with Lady Fanshawe’s reserve. When Sir Richard was forced to leave his wife and their dying firstborn child behind early in their marriage, it was he rather than Lady Fanshawe who wept: “[H]e was extreemly afflicted even to tears, though passion was against his nature.”¹⁰² Later, when Lady Fanshawe was trapped in an Irish town that had just seceded to Parliament, she wrote to a helplessly waiting Sir Richard “perswading him to patience and hope y^t I should gett safely out of y^e Town by God^s assistance.”¹⁰³ Sir Richard was

y^e most disconsolate man in y^e world for fear of his family which he had no possibility to assist but his joys exceeded to see me and his darling daughter, and to hear y^e wounderfull escape we through y^e assistance of God had made[.]¹⁰⁴

The temporary role reversal here points toward the ultimate reversal that happened when Sir Richard died – to all appearances a victim of disappointment – and Lady Fanshawe was forced to assume his role as head of their family. Grief at the deaths of her father and her eldest son made Lady Fanshawe seriously ill, but at Sir Richard’s death she was supremely master of herself and the situation.¹⁰⁵ She not only supervised all the proper arrangements for Sir Richard’s body and burial, she also made and received the state visits due to his position, settled

¹⁰⁰ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 48r.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 40v.

¹⁰² Ibid., 16r.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 29r.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 30r.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 52r, 119r.

his affairs in an honourable manner, and shepherded his household back to England.¹⁰⁶ Once there, however, she had to face the realization that this reversal was permanent. In her reflections on her widowed condition, Sir Richard's stoic advice and her own passionate temperament finally melded in a determination to be resigned in the midst of her grief. In the middle of a diatribe against the cavalier English court that could sacrifice men, fortunes, and families without any thought of recompense, she also described her efforts to practice balance despite extreme loss. "In y^s great distress I had no remedy but patience," she wrote, and so she

resolved to hold me fast by God, untill I could disgest in some measure my afflictions, sometimes I thought to quitt y^e world, as a sacrifice to yo^r fathers memory, & to shut myself up in a house for ever from all people, but upon y^e considering of my children who were all young and unprovided for, being wholly left to my care and dispose I resolved to suffer as long as it pleased God y^e stormes & flowes of fortune.¹⁰⁷

Though grief made withdrawal appealing, responsibility for her family forced her to persevere, even in suffering, "as long as it pleased God." For Lady Fanshawe, whose story was still unfinished, the practice of balance was not the stable ideal that Sir Richard had modeled, but the constant strain of navigating alternating extremes. This explains the violence of the balance imagery that she used for her life in general, the runaway horse and the storm-tossed ship: "as in a Racke y^e turbulence of y^e waves disperses y^e Splinters of y^e Rock so it was my lot."¹⁰⁸

The script of balance worked well for Lady Fanshawe's *Discourse* because it fit both the ideal and the reality of life she wanted to portray, not only to her son but also to the rest of her audience. For her son, Lady Fanshawe intended her *Discourse* to be instructive both as a model and as a warning: "[B]y y^e example you may imitate what is applyable to your Condition in y^s

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 110r-116r; cf. Bagshaw, *Sermon Preacht in Madrid*, "Epistle Dedicatory"; Seelig, *Autobiography and Gender*, 105-108.

¹⁰⁷ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 114r, 117v.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 13v.

world, and indeavour to avoyde those misfortunes we have passed through if God pleases.”¹⁰⁹

Sir Richard served as a static ideal for his son to “Remember” and “imitate,” while Lady Fanshawe modeled the process of conforming to the ideal.¹¹⁰ To her wider audience, Lady Fanshawe was making an appeal rather than giving maternal instruction. Here she needed to evoke sympathy by demonstrating the family’s unrecompensed sufferings, which made the emotional pathos of her *Discourse* as crucial to its message as its stoic philosophy. The emotional moments had to be carefully placed, however, so as not to weaken her portrait of Sir Richard – an eye for public appearances which Lady Fanshawe had developed over a quarter-century of performing as an ambassador’s wife.¹¹¹ So while Lady Fanshawe’s critics are right that her self-portrayal in the *Discourse* is shaped by husband and marriage, they overlook her role in creating that portrayal. It was a skilful and rhetorically effective depiction of the reality of her life.¹¹²

The variations in Lady Fanshawe’s portrayal of illness reflect these priorities in her *Discourse*. In general, she presented illness and death with an emphasis on stoic resignation. Her selective emotional display fit the demands of the larger narrative, but even that terseness could be powerful. She expressed her grief at the deaths of her three eldest children by a hasty removal from the location saddened by loss, by a wish to join her child in the grave, and by a miscarriage and protracted illness.¹¹³ That she did not always elaborate does not mean the incident was painless. Her illnesses from grief at the deaths of her son and her father, and her

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 2r; cf. 9v.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 3r, 4r.

¹¹¹ Her consciousness of role-playing is especially evident in her letters to Sir Richard: see *Heathcote Manuscripts*, 225-227, 229, 231, 235, 239-240.

¹¹² Contrast Keeble’s insistence on an “inescapable tension” between the woman writer and her self-portrayal: N. H. Keeble, “‘The Colonel’s Shadow’: Lucy Hutchinson, Women’s Writing and the Civil War,” in *Literature and the English Civil War*, ed. Thomas F. Healy and Jonathan Sawday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 227-247; Keeble, “Obedient Subjects?”.

¹¹³ Fanshawe, BLA 41161, 28v, 48r, 52r.

weakness in Sir Richard's absences, should only heighten the reader's awareness of the fortitude it required *not* to collapse when Sir Richard died – and even to shoulder the immense burden of leading the family alone. Her manner of portraying Sir Richard's death, then, should be read not as equivocation but as a scene carefully designed to honour their joint commitment to a philosophy of balance.

Conclusion

Reconnecting religious language to the mind-body discussion has two major benefits for readers of early modern illness narratives. In the first place, it expands awareness of how differently early modern people experienced illness by adding the religious dimension. Thinking humorally about providence helps the modern reader bridge the unfamiliarity of early modern perceptions by making religious expressions not just a spiritual interpretation but an active part of illness experience. In the second place, it gives a new coherence to the religious resignation language that surfaces in so many illness narratives, which can easily seem ineffective, if not downright masochistic.¹¹⁴ Reading resignation language alongside a humoral understanding of balance makes it possible to grasp how early modern people could reconcile the ideal with hard experiences, and it cultivates a deeper understanding of both illness narratives and the life narratives in which they are rooted.

In these three women's writings, balance is a strongly retrospective script; it is the language of widowhood. Though they were taught early in life to view life as a cycle of good and ill that God managed for the best, their expectations of that cycle changed over the course of their lives. The alteration in their resignation language over time is marked. Lady Fanshawe learned her stoic philosophy from her husband during their marriage, but the real test came after his death, producing a struggle between the need to exercise the ideal on the one hand and her

¹¹⁴ See especially Porter and Porter, *Sickness and Health*, 235-237; contrast 9, 176.

grief on the other. Life had tossed her till it wrecked her, and she could only “resolve to suffer.” Lady Halkett, too, changed the tone of her resignation language between her first and her second meditation in response to the intervening deaths of two children and financial losses. In the first she was sanguine that “mercies” prevented “crosses” from being unbearable, but in the second she considered any joy short-lived, little better than a warning of approaching calamity. Yet this pessimism – early modern people might call it the melancholy of old age – needs to be weighed against the evidence that it counteracted the women’s tendency to view their suffering as a punishment for sin.¹¹⁵ Alice Thornton’s earliest childbirth meditations emphasized confession of sin, while balance language did not appear till the birth and death of her sixth child.¹¹⁶ At that point the punishment rhetoric gradually lost ground to resignation language until the former finally disappeared from her reflections.¹¹⁷ She described the relentless series of deaths and illnesses that preceded William Thornton’s death in terms of balance only.

Religion has been too narrowly circumscribed in the history of medicine, not only as an alternative source of healing but also within a strictly theological view of providence, sin and punishment. Even for the educated, orthodox layperson, its role in illness experience could be far broader and less conflicted. The script of balance is a useful tool to overcome the anachronistic distinctions between spiritual and bodily experience that still influence scholarship on early modern illness experience. As this chapter has shown, certain aspects of personal illness narratives are lost without an awareness of how easily ideas about balance bridged the physical, emotional and spiritual. In a case like Lady Fanshawe’s *Discourse*, observing the script of balance can facilitate the rereading of a whole manuscript.

¹¹⁵ Lange, “Humourous Grief,” 78.

¹¹⁶ Thornton, *Autobiography*, 88-90, 96-97, 124-126.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 141, 148-149, 151, 166, 172.

CONCLUSION

Persistent Widows

Far from obscuring illness experience, religious language played an important role in recording these women's illness experiences. Despite their formality, conventional expressions originated in close proximity to the experience itself. Some illness narratives began as prayers of thanksgiving that were composed during recovery from childbirth or dangerous illness. The discipline of giving thanks for deliverance made it possible to record illness experience well before its fuller meaning in a person's life story could take shape. Good death narratives could also record illness experience soon after it happened. In fact, such narratives were in the making before death occurred, as witnesses carefully noted specific ways the dying person performed the key virtues of the good death. Likewise, the script of balance created illness narratives while the experience was still in progress by offering the women a coping mechanism for the ups and downs of illness. Recognizing the inevitable cycle of good and ill helped them weather the present despite the unknown future.

Besides providing some of the earliest motives and structures for recording illness experience, religious language was also essential to the process of anchoring individual illness incidents into the broader themes of a life story. This process could be complex, involving different genres of writing that affected the use of religious language and the portrayal of illness. For both Alice Thornton and Lady Halkett, writing that had originally been devotional, and thus private, took on a new, public role in an apologetic crisis. While Lady Halkett rewrote her *True Accountt of My Life* in a different style from the meditative writing that she used as a source, Alice Thornton merged devotional and defensive writing in an unusual but effective combination. Ironically for all three women, although widowhood crises galvanized their

autobiographical narratives, the significance of those financial and social issues soon waned. Certainly by the time the women died, their descendants preserved (and in some cases published) their writing not for defensive purposes but as posthumous piety which reflected well on the family. Yet these motives are as important as why the women wrote, because they account for why historians have the stories today. When reading these women's illness narratives, all these layers in the process of writing need to be taken into consideration.

Paying attention to religious scripts reclaims a body of evidence about illness experience that is otherwise largely inaccessible, buried in the forms and allusions of past religious conventions. It measures the effectiveness of religious language from a different perspective, as a rhetorical tool rather than a competing healer in the medical marketplace (though religion was that too). Reading religious language in this manner is complex and time-consuming. It involves learning the scripts, since one must recognize the form in order to pick out distinctive nuances.¹ And it requires context: careful comparison within a person's writings, among similar writers, and alongside possible cultural models. Such work is laborious, but necessary and rewarding. Its results extend well beyond illness narratives themselves to generate new readings of the women's writings overall, showing how thanksgiving worked for Alice Thornton, how Lady Halkett appropriated her good death narratives, and how the script of balance enabled Lady Fanshawe to combine stoicism with emotional display.

To read religious language more effectively, more context is needed. Although it is already begun, much more work on women's reading and writing habits could be done.² There is a great deal of evidence for the influence of devotional routines on women's literary

¹ Cf. Porter and Porter, *Sickness and Health*, 9.

² See, for example, Margaret J. M. Ezell, "Women and Writing," in *Companion to Women's Writing*, 77-94; Victoria E. Burke, "Let's Get Physical: Bibliography, Codicology, and Seventeenth-Century Women's Manuscripts," *Literature Compass* 4, no. 6 (2007): 1667-1682; Heidi Brayman Hackel, *Reading Material in Early Modern England: Print, Gender, and Literacy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

production, but scholars have been uncomfortable with it, taking it as an indication of how male discourse dominated women's expression.³ The gender issue is important, but first the evidence needs to be systematically analyzed so that, for example, Lady Halkett's and Mary Rich's meditations and Elizabeth Egerton's prayers can be compared to Alice Thornton's. Or, women's habits of paraphrasing could be used to shed light on how they read and interpreted not just devotional material but even their own writing, which they continually revised. More attention to the physical characteristics of the manuscripts and what they communicate about other authors and forces shaping the text is also crucial. The physical characteristics of these women's manuscripts offer considerable evidence on the process of writing, and on factors other than the women which shaped the text; but these features – damages, marginalia, different colours of ink, quality of writing material – are difficult to preserve in print.⁴

Finally, as a concluding reflection, it is worth comparing the role of religious scripts in early modern versus modern illness narratives. Illness narratives can be a valuable coping mechanism, now as much as in the early modern period. Yet religious scripts have changed, not least in their status alongside medical care. As this thesis has shown, religious language was crucial to these early modern women's remarkable persistence in the face of suffering. Some would say that the effectiveness of religious language in the early modern period was inversely proportional to the success of medicine. Momentarily ignoring the question of whether that is a fair assessment of early modern attitudes, the same observation can be applied today: medicine is not always successful. How then might religious language – and other social scripts – be useful even now when medicine has reached its limit? Very little attention has been given to religious

³ Trill, "Women's Use of the Psalms."; Mendelson, *Mental World*, 80-110. But note the similarities between Mendelson's evaluation of Mary Rich's devotional writing and Paul Seaver's assessment of Nehemiah Wallington's providential record-keeping: *Wallington's World*, 183-187.

⁴ An excellent attempt has been made with Lady Halkett's manuscripts on the Perdita Manuscripts site; but words and digital images can only convey so much. Cf. Burke, "Let's Get Physical."; Ross, "Providence and Poetry."

language in modern illness narratives, in part because its role in the past has not been entirely positive, but also because such a firm intellectual boundary has developed between science and religion.⁵ Given that modern medicine is increasingly overwhelmed, especially with end-of-life care, the potential of non-medical support such as illness narratives could be considerable.

Helping sufferers to develop illness narratives by acknowledging the importance of their own stories, and even by coaching them in the development of these stories, might significantly improve end-of-life care.⁶ Long-standing religious – or better, spiritual – scripts are an important part of many sufferers' literary repertoire. Could medicine work with these expressions, rather than uncomfortably skirting them?

⁵ See, for example, Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor and AIDS and Its Metaphors* (New York: Picador, 2001).

⁶ These ideas are developed in a general way in the following studies: Rita Charon, *Narrative Medicine: Honoring the Stories of Illness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Arthur W. Frank, *The Wounded Storyteller: Body, Illness, and Ethics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995); Louise DeSalvo, *Writing as a Way of Healing: How Telling Our Stories Transforms Our Lives* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1999).

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