



My First Booke of My Life (Early Modern Cultural Studies)

Alice Thornton

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An early modern domestic and spiritual memoir, *My First Booke of My Life* depicts the life of Alice Thornton (1626–1707), a complex, contradictory woman caught in the changing fortunes and social realities of the seventeenth century. Her memoir documents her perspective on the Irish rebellion and English civil war as well as on a plethora of domestic dangers and difficulties: from her reluctant marriage, which sought to rescue the sequestered family estate and clear her brother's name, to financial crises, to the illnesses and deaths of several family members and six children, to slanderous criticisms of her fidelity and her parenting.

This first complete edition of an autobiographical apologia begins with recollections of Thornton's childhood and ends with the death of her husband, restoring almost half of the original text omitted from the nineteenth-century edition. The image she fashions of a woman devoted to God and family evolves from the conventional format of the deliverance memoir into a rhetorically sophisticated defense of her life in response to rumored scandal. Inseparable from the praise of God and family is the distinctive sense of identity that emerges from the introduction, text, and annotations, all of which provide a significant contribution to early modern woman's writing.

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