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**Faith and Art: Anne Bradstreet's Puritan Creativity**

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Sophia Farthing

Jacksonville, Florida

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## Abstract

As one of Puritanism's best-known Puritan writers, Anne Bradstreet is a popular topic for scholars exploring gender issues in a Puritan context. Bradstreet's poetry has drawn attention to the possibility of Puritan theology as inspiration for art. However, misunderstanding of Puritan cultural complexity and cursory readings of Bradstreet's texts have resulted in misrepresentations of Bradstreet's interaction with Puritan culture and ideas. This thesis examines Bradstreet's life and work, including the variety of supportive literary influences she experienced as a child. The historical value of Bradstreet's texts is made clear by her poetic insight on political issues, history, and gender conflict, as well as her meditations on God's presence in personal suffering. Throughout, this essay compares Bradstreet to contemporary Puritan women writers who explored similar themes through poetry, meditations, theological treatises, and a variety of other genres. Against this backdrop of female Puritan voices, Bradstreet's Puritanism becomes the inspiration for her creativity.

## Introduction

“[C]riticism is constantly being driven to examine states of mind rather than apparent subject-matter,” writes E.M.W. Tillyard in his famous literary debate with C.S. Lewis.<sup>1</sup> Both men ask the question: what is the meaning of a work of poetry? Is it found in the identity of the poet, or can the poem stand alone? To Lewis, good poetry—and, by extension, great writing—speaks something universal that cannot be explained simply by the author’s personality and context. While Tillyard affirms the universal, objective meaning of the written word, he recognizes another layer of meaning—the voice of the author who creates the written work. Perspective is essential, says Tillyard, because it shapes the telling. It creates widely varying accounts of historical events. And because of this phenomenon, if readers can know the author, they are a step closer to understanding her words.

Tillyard addressed literary criticism, but his statement also highlights the complexity of historical analysis. Historians examine historical records and writings to identify truth about the past. These records constitute vast body of evidence: they are influenced by a host of religious, social, political, geological, and economic factors. The scholar must identify these factors in order to synthesize the context of the source and understand its meaning. But at the same time each text is a personal act of creation. It is not just the product of a movement or culture, but a movement itself, not simply a noun, but a verb. Further, historians too are a part of this paradigm. Each researcher’s unique religious, cultural, political context unavoidably impacts his

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<sup>1</sup> E. M.W. Tillyard, "VI," in *The Personal Heresy: A Controversy*, by C. S. Lewis and E. M.W. Tillyard, First ed., (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1939), 166.

or her results. Scholarship reflects this: something of the past, something of the present, and something of ourselves.

And so, scholars face Tillyard's balance: "subject-matter" and "states of mind." Not only must they establish the position of a primary source within historical context, but they must also situate the author within that same arena. More difficult still, they cannot confuse that author's context with their own, or his identity with themselves. Of course, the common solution to this challenge has been to include disclaimers on shifting cultural constructs and their impact on historiographical trends. But while such statements recognize cultural and philosophical plurality in the abstract, historical literature too often blurs the line between evidence and interpretation. This is dangerous revisionism: not the revision of interpretation to acknowledge marginalized evidence, but the revision of evidence to acknowledge twenty-first century values and ideas.

Perhaps no historical sub-set has suffered more from this appropriation than women writers. Ground-breaking research over the past fifty years has uncovered a myriad of female voices, especially in 16th and 17th century Europe and North America, whose impact on the Atlantic world historians are only beginning to discover. These marginalized texts continue to shape and change the history of religion, philosophy, gender issues, and literature. Yet, scholarship continues to simplify historical texts into categories grounded in present-day cultural norms. Current histories of these cultures are peopled with domestic victims, repressed feminists, and the occasional Elizabeth I. Female writers such as Lady Grace Mildmay, Hannah Allen, Lady Brilliana Harley, and Elizabeth Major either are made to subvert their cultural context or meekly shadow patriarchal authority.<sup>2</sup> History of this time period continues to take shape in light

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<sup>2</sup> Alice Henton both confronts and coincides with this perspective in her recent essay "Once Masculines... Now Feminines Awhile": Gendered Imagery and the Significance of Anne Bradstreet's 'The Tenth Muse,'" *The New England Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (June 2012), 323.

of these texts. But it remains homogenous at best and, at worst, an imposition of post-modern Western ideals on women whose active authorial voices both drew from and contributed to a very different culture from the twenty-first century West.

Significant among these women is the New England Puritan Anne Bradstreet. In 1650, Bradstreet's manuscript poetry was published in *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*, and later poems and documents were printed after her death. Widespread appropriation of Bradstreet's "state of mind" by historians effectively silences her voice and the voices of women on both sides of the Atlantic who contributed publicly to spiritual conversations through poetry, letters, and memoirs respected by their fellow believers of both sexes. Further, this "victim or rebel" stereotype downplays the active role that Puritan women played in their personal relationships with God as recorded in their writings and testimonies.

Bradstreet's published writings demonstrate an educated interest in literary and political issues of her time, an elegant discussion of philosophy through verse. Her later poetry and prose reveal confidence with God and protective care for her family. And within an intercultural context, she contributes to an ongoing conversation through literature. This project seeks to compare Bradstreet's authorship, framed within the authentic historical context of the Puritan movement, to the recent trend of "silencing" historiography. Based on this research, this project urges for a reassessment of female literary voices that accurately represents their religious, political, and cultural diversity. Scholarship cannot ignore the limitations and errors of its subjects, but historians can seek to understand these women objectively within their Puritan culture without enforcing uniformity in their "states of mind."

Puritanism's theology and applications have created an ongoing debate among scholars for several centuries.<sup>3</sup> Recently, historians such as Peter Lake and Charles L. Cohen have highlighted the increasing contributions of revisionist historians. These writers have tied together the many loose threads of research left to us by Perry Miller, Edmund Sears Morgan, and Christopher Hill, revealing a web of religious, social, economic, political, and geographical factors that functioned symbiotically with Puritan culture.<sup>4</sup> Puritanism fueled decades of conflict among English bishops and dispersed university graduates across the parishes on preaching tours. Puritan nobility battled Elizabeth I, James I, and Charles I for over a century. Among the middle-class, Puritan merchants and gentry left comfortable homes and traveled hundreds of miles across the Atlantic. There they scraped a subsistence out of the land in a frigid climate.

Historians have paid due respect to these remarkable accomplishments. Often overlooked, however, is the overwhelming literary production of Puritan women. Puritans shared their experiences with each other, meditated on their faith, and explored their Scriptures. The

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<sup>3</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, the term "Puritan" will refer to Protestants who embraced Calvinist theology and sought reform within the Church of England during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. When possible, Puritans usually adopted Congregationalist or Presbyterian forms of church government. However, political and eschatological applications of theology varied. Michael Winship has recently drawn attention to New England Puritanism's initial separatist tendencies. Early influencers at Massachusetts Bay established connections with the Plymouth colony, and geographical isolation enabled Massachusetts ministers and magistrates to systemize reform from the ground up, rather than seek to alter the existing structure. However, the term "Puritan" is not applied in this thesis to separatist, Quaker, Anabaptist, or antinomian groups who would have been viewed by mainstream Puritans as alternative, often as heretical. On Massachusetts Bay's early ties to Plymouth, see Michael P. Winship, "Chapter 6: Separatism at Salem?," in *Godly Republicanism: Puritans, Pilgrims, and a City on a Hill* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 134-58.

<sup>4</sup> On evolving histories of Puritanism, see Peter Lake, "The Historiography of Puritanism," in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 347-9, and Charles L. Cohen, "The Post-Puritan Paradigm of Early American Religious History," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 4, Religion in Early America (October 1997), 701.

testimonies, meditations, poetry, and theology of Puritan women in particular have inspired in turn a wide variety of historical interpretations, often stressing one or more factors that influenced Puritan thought, but rarely touching all. The fragmentation of women's studies has made synthesis even more difficult; texts rediscovered by feminist scholars often remain isolated from mainstream historiography. Margaret Ezell's groundbreaking study in 1993, *Writing Women's Literary History*, draws attention to this conflict. According to Ezell, feminist scholarship uncovers seventeenth-century women writers like Anne Bradstreet, but perpetuates the myth of their abnormality.<sup>5</sup> Meanwhile, mainstream historians often fail to integrate these writers as primary evidence. As a result, Puritan women writers are labeled either wrathful rebels or submissive robots. Fifty years ago, Herbert Butterfield accused Whig historians of "the tendency to patch the new research into the old story even when the research in detail has altered the bearings of the whole subject."<sup>6</sup> Whig sentimentality has too often painted the complex events and characters of early modern history as unequivocal triumphs of Protestant proto-democracy. While revisionists have worked diligently to correct this generalization, they too often stumble down the same path. Mainstream scholarship occasionally acknowledges that Puritan women wrote, but rarely interacts with the texts at length or places them in a general historical context.

English Puritanism was a movement of the literate. From its beginnings among the scholarly Reformers, it attracted readers and writers of all descriptions, and while its chief

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<sup>5</sup> Ezell argues that, "Because of the way we have defined authorship, audience, and literature, we have effectively silenced a large number of early women's voices in our very attempts to preserve and celebrate women's writings." Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1993), 38.

<sup>6</sup> Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1965), 6.



defenders and antagonists battled each other through legislation, literature was often their weapon of choice. Puritan women writers participated in many ways. In 1642, Anne Bradstreet wrote “A Dialogue Between Old England and New, concerning their present troubles,” in which she exalts the Puritan Parliamentary leaders and encouraged godliness as the solution to the bloodshed.<sup>7</sup> Lucy Hutchinson, in elegies on her husband’s death, glorified the suffering of Puritans during the Restoration and grieved for the lost cause of the godly republic.<sup>8</sup> Through manuscript and print, women like Bradstreet and Hutchinson could circulate their ideas and strengthen Puritan support.

The Puritan movement deeply impacted English politics, religion, and culture. While Puritans often worked within existing religious and political structures in the years preceding Cromwell’s revolution, their influence gained scholarly recognition from their contemporaries. Ironically, Archbishop Richard Bancroft, a staunch defender of conformity and enemy of Elizabethan Puritanism also became one of its first historians. In books that included

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<sup>7</sup> This thesis references poems from the 1650 edition of *The Tenth Muse*, rather than from later, edited collections because they are closest to reading the poems in manuscript form. While Bradstreet did make edits and add verses in preparation for the posthumous publication of *Several Poems* (1678), it is not always clear which edits she made and which were added by the publisher. Thus, in referring to the earliest known copy of each poem, I have tried to preserve the narrative of composition chronologically. Scholars of Bradstreet have often run into difficulties by indiscriminately referencing the 1967 edition of Bradstreet’s poetry, edited by Jeannine Hensley, which does not modernize spelling consistently or clarify alterations and transitions between primary sources. As a precaution, this thesis *always* references both the title of the poem or prose piece *and* the collection from which it is quoted. This method ensures that readers can trace the specific version of the poem directly to its source. See Anne Bradstreet, "A Dialogue between Old England and New, concerning their present troubles," in *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America or Severall Poems, Compiled with Great Variety of Wit and Learning, Full of Delight*. (London: Printed for Stephen Bowtell at the Sign of the Bible in Popes Head-Alley, 1650), 180-90.

<sup>8</sup> See Lucy Hutchinson, “I,” in “Elegies,” in David Norbrook and Lucy Hutchinson, "Lucy Hutchinson's 'Elegies' and the Situation of the Republican Woman Writer (with Text)," *English Literary Renaissance* 27, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 487-8.

*Dangerous Positions and Proceedings* in 1593 and *A Survey of the Pretended Holy Discipline*, one edition of which was published posthumously in 1663, Bancroft crafted a partisan history. His writings interspersed general history of Puritanism's development and theology with exasperated denunciations of theological discord. Bradstreet's father, Sir Thomas Dudley, would have experienced the repercussions of Bancroft's criticism as a young man in the household of the Puritan Earl of Lincoln. Deeply antagonistic towards Puritan politics, Bancroft portrayed the movement as a consummate rejection of civil and ecclesiastical authority that embraces every opportunity to reject the hierarchical structure of English society. Puritanism, he argued, destroyed church government and sought to erase class distinctions permanently.<sup>9</sup>

A contemporary of Bradstreet, historian and minister Samuel Clarke developed a more balanced approach in his *The Marrow of Ecclesiastical History*. In this volume, published in 1654, Clarke recorded the lives of famous theologians, ministers, and bishops of the Early Church and the Reformation. *The Marrow of Ecclesiastical History* was followed by other histories including *The Lives of Two and Twenty English Divines* in 1660 and *The Lives of Sundry Eminent Persons in This Later Age*, published in 1683. Significant to this was his inclusion of Puritan ministers and bishops such as Archbishop Grindal alongside famous reformers including Theodore Beza. Even though Clarke's writings were contemporary with the Puritan movement itself, he synthesized the church fathers, the Reformers, and the Church of England in one harmonious tradition. Both Puritans *and* anti-Puritan Anglicans received respect for their personal holiness and contributions to orthodox faith. "Here they shall see," Clark

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<sup>9</sup> While Bancroft's representation is clearly partisan, his historiography is fascinating because it paves the way for American historians of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who created a "Puritan heritage" of civil rebellion for the United States. Bancroft also precedes later British historians who continued to interpret English Puritanism as anti-authoritarian in religion and politics.

writes, “in what Centuries, Ages, and places the famousest lights of the Church, both Antient and Modern, have flourished.”<sup>10</sup> This early acknowledgement of diversity within orthodoxy provides insight into the varying expressions of Puritanism within both England and New England and arguably precedes Patrick Collinson’s thesis several hundred years later that Puritanism grew within—not in opposition to—the Church of England.<sup>11</sup>

Clarke’s unique perspective, however, was not mirrored by Cotton Mather whose *Magnalia Christi Americana*, published in 1702, introduced the specific study of New England Puritanism. In seven books, Mather traced God’s providential guidance throughout New England’s origins and establishment. His stance was as strongly partisan as Bancroft’s in his narration of the providential discovery of New England, God’s provision for its settlement, and the noble aspirations and efforts of the colonists.<sup>12</sup> Remarkably, Mather isolated New England’s history from development in England. He rarely mentioned female authors, but praised Bradstreet’s poetic accomplishments effusively, positioning her among a broad swath of “Learned Women of the other Hemisphere” including Anna Maria van Schurman and Hippatia.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Samuel Clarke, *The Marrow of Ecclesiastical History*, Second ed. (London: Printed for T.V., 1654), 45.

<sup>11</sup> See Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 45.

<sup>12</sup> Mather writes, “The God of Heaven served, as it were, a Summons upon the Spirits of His People in the English Nation; stirring up the Spirits of Thousands which never saw the Faces of each other, with a most Unanimous Inclination to leave all the Pleasant Accomodations of their Native Country, . . . for the pure Enjoyment of all his Ordinances” (151). This source is referenced throughout this thesis by page number, not by line. See Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, ed. Kenneth B. Murdock and Elizabeth W. Miller, Book I: Ecclesiarum Clypei: Ecclesiarum Clypei (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), 151.

<sup>13</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, ed. Kenneth B. Murdock and Elizabeth W. Miller, Book I: Antiquities (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), 23, 23-4n.

It is possible that other Puritan academics may have similarly viewed women authors as part of their cultural heritage.

Contemporary and eighteenth-century historiography of Puritanism, while often partisan, illustrates not only the enormity of the conflict, but also the perceived importance of religious motivations. These scholars prioritized theological accuracy and holy religion. In their eyes, disobedience either to the biblical authority of church and state or to the Scriptures themselves were grounds for the loudest protest. Many historians during the nineteenth century divided along these same lines; however, the late 1800s saw an increasing preoccupation with economic and social interpretations in the mainstream. "Nineteenth-century historians and authors," writes Lindsay Dicuirci, "began to uncover a troubling Puritan history stained by bigotry, superstition, faction, and war."<sup>14</sup> Both Puritans like Bradstreet and their opponents saw religious and political conflict as essential to Puritanism. But later historians would increasingly avoid this open integration of religious beliefs with political and economic conflict in their historiography.

Popular among English and American historians was the Whig interpretation that aligned Puritanism and sectarians with the heroic causes of religious and political freedom.<sup>15</sup> While

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<sup>14</sup> Lindsay Dicuirci, "Reviving Puritan History: Evangelicalism, Antiquarianism, and Mather's *Magnalia* in Antebellum America," *Early American Literature* 45, no. 3 (Fall 2010): 567.

<sup>15</sup> Typical of this is an article in *The Monthly Repository of Theology and Literature* published in London in 1825, which lumps English Puritans under the broader term "Nonconformists." The article enthusiastically proclaims that the Puritan "situation as religionists set them in opposition to arbitrary power; they stood manfully in the gap, with their lives in their hands; and to their fortitude and self-devotion in the most critical period of our history are mainly owing our free institutions." R. Aspland, ed., "The Puritans. No. 1," *The Monthly Repository of Theology and General Literature* 20, no. 231 (March 1825): 129. As previously discussed, Herbert Butterfield's essay in 1965, *The Whig Interpretation of History*, shot down such hagiography as "the tendency in many historians to write on the side of Protestants and Whigs, to praise revolutions provided they have been successful, . . . and to produce a story which is the ratification if not the glorification of the present." Ironically, recent historiography has swung a little too far in the other direction: categorical "glorification" of

religion still played an important part in historiography of the time period and its status as the primary motivation for Puritanism was still widely acknowledged, historians led by David Hume no longer viewed theology as integral to practical involvement in Parliamentary and emigrant action. Hume in *The History of England* wrote that “it was to this sect, whose principles appear so frivolous and habits so ridiculous, that the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution.”<sup>16</sup> Puritan culture was reduced to a religiously motivated political framework.

Unfortunately, this simplification discarded significant theologians and artists. Puritanism was reduced to a romantic portrait of somber politicians rebelling against absolute tyranny.<sup>17</sup> Puritan women had little place in this canon. Even Puritan theologians melted into the broader history of the Church of England or were labeled “nonconformists.” Occasionally, Whig historians published Puritan women authors for their connection to nonconformist, “revolutionary” male leaders or as models of artistic virtue. In 1867, *The Works of Anne Bradstreet in Prose and Verse* appeared in print, edited by John Harvard Ellis, whose scrupulously detailed description of the Andover Manuscript in the preface suggests an appreciation for it as a historical text.<sup>18</sup> The letters of Lady Brilliana Harley were printed in 1854, with a biography of her husband, Sir Robert, and an introduction that discussed her husband and

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religious nonconformity may have given way to categorical denunciation. See Butterfield, “Preface,” preface to *The Whig Interpretation of History*, v.

<sup>16</sup> David Hume, *The History of England from the Invasion of Julius Caesar to The Revolution in 1688*, Based on the 1778 ed., vol. 4 (Indianapolis, IN: Liberty Fund, 1983), 146.

<sup>17</sup> Authors like the strongly Anglican Robert Southey in *The Book of the Church*, which ran to its sixth edition in 1848, might continue to defend ecclesiastical authority in politics. But Southey’s partisan attack on the “fanatical Protestants” who dared to argue against church authority was widely dismissed, as was his absence of references. Southey tasted too strongly of Archbishop Bancroft’s seventeenth-century enthusiasm. See Robert Southey, *The Book of the Church*, Sixth ed. (London: John Murray, 1848), 387.

<sup>18</sup> See John Harvard Ellis, “Preface,” in *The Works of Anne Bradstreet in Prose and Verse*, ed. John Harvard Ellis (Charlestown: Abram E. Cutter, 1867), vii-ix.

son's political accomplishments.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Puritan women writers were published during the nineteenth century, but they garnered few references from historians. Famous Puritan political leaders attracted mainstream historiographical interest, and Puritan culture as such was largely forgotten.

The shift in emphasis here cannot be overestimated. Among American scholars, the Whig school would continue to hold up New England Puritanism as a model of virtuous action against injustice; the economic and Imperial schools would work to provide a political and economic arena for the perseverance of the movement and its conflicts. But Puritanism was no longer viewed as a passionate commitment to a providential God whose scriptures might or might not be interpreted correctly; instead, it was a set of values abstract, if admirable, in a sea of motivations.<sup>20</sup> During the late nineteenth century, historians would dismiss the idea that Puritanism centered around theological issues. It "was not so much an organised system as a religious temper and a moral force," wrote John Brown in *The English Puritans* (1912).<sup>21</sup> As a political revolution fueled by religious fervor, Puritanism was a closed case.

Perry Miller's masterful work, *The New England Mind*, reopened the closed case in 1939. Historians have paid tribute through debate to his meticulous research and his insight into the

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<sup>19</sup> See Thomas Taylor Lewis, "Introduction," in *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley, Wife of Sir Robert Harley, of Brampton Bryan, Knight of the Bath.*, ed. Thomas Taylor Lewis (London: Printed for the Camden Society, 1854), vi-xxix; "The Character of Sir Robert Harley, taken from a Sermon preached at his Funeral, entitled, 'The Beloved Disciple,' by Thomas Froyssell, Minister of Clun, in Shropshire. Lond. 1658," in *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, xxxi (unmarked)-xxxix.

<sup>20</sup> Articulating this interpretation, Charles A. Beard would inform the American Historical Association in 1933 that "science, art, theology, and literature are themselves merely phases of history as past actuality and their particular forms at given periods and places are to be explained, if explained at all, by history as knowledge and thought." Charles A. Beard, "Written History as an Act of Faith," *American Historical Review* 39, no. 2 (January 1934): 219.

<sup>21</sup> John Brown, *The English Puritans*, *The Cambridge Manuals of Science and Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1912), 1.

brilliant minds of a largely forgotten movement. In the first volume of this magnum opus, titled *The Seventeenth Century*, Miller lays down the first principles of his thesis, that “Puritan scholasticism” in New England was not simply a sect fixated on political control, but a powerful, mystical piety. Loathing of sin, passion for godliness, and a love of good and beauty absorb Miller’s Puritan minds. The resultant image is that of a people moved by a religious impulse, at times rational, but ultimately indescribable.

Of major concern is, of course, Miller’s methodology: in his preface he explains that he is “treating the whole literature as though it were the product of a single intelligence.”<sup>22</sup> Thus, while he does full justice to the profound reverence of the Puritans, he uses authors of widely disparate views interchangeably, often without reference. Miller’s insightful representation of the Puritan intellect reawakened recognition of its roots in Christian orthodoxy, which interacted with the political, socioeconomic, and gendered issues of its day. This was a step towards acknowledgement of Puritanism as a culture and highlighted the literary accomplishments of Puritan authors. But because Miller’s analysis is itself mystic, *The New England Mind* remains a magnificent challenge to grasp the religious passion of the Puritan people while presenting their beliefs in a nuanced historical context. He barely acknowledges the distinction between New England Puritanism, a stricter strain developing in isolation under immense physical hardship, and English Puritanism, which remained theologically and politically diverse. Moreover, the distinctive voices of individuals like Bradstreet are lost in Miller’s analysis.

Several historians such as Geoffrey Nuttall and Edmund Morgan have addressed Miller's thesis. In *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (1947), Geoffrey Nuttall argues that

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<sup>22</sup> Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Mansfield Centre, CT: Martino Publishing, 2014), vii.

the Holy Spirit's intimate presence, usually ignored by Catholic and Anglican theologians after the early church, became an essential part of dissenting belief following the Reformation. This paves the way for later historians including Francis Bremer explore practical Puritan theology's effect on the laity and popular culture. Similarly, Morgan explores Puritans as part of the reformed tradition in *Visible Saints* (1965), providing the concrete theological explanation Miller lacks. According to Morgan's synthesis, Puritanism was more than mystic reverence for God and godliness; it was a carefully structured set of doctrines with direct practical applications through discipline to create an orderly society. *Visible Saints* makes possible a representation of multifaceted Puritan culture that once more acknowledges the significance of theology to Puritan leaders, if not to Puritan laity.

Since these scholars revived historiography of Puritanism, a vocal minority has been, as always, the Whig school of historians in both England and America, still valiantly defending the New England colonists as heroic revolutionaries who effectively introduced religious tolerance and political freedom. Authors like Alan Heimert in his *Religion and the American Mind* (1966) attribute the Revolution to orthodox Christianity that blossomed from Puritan Presbyterianism in the Great Awakening. This thesis has been widely disputed for its neglect of the diverse religious beliefs of the southern and middle colonies, but it also illustrates the need for a clearer understanding of theological diversity within Puritan culture itself. Building on a rich legacy of previous research, revisionist historians have responded from a variety of perspectives. They explore Puritanism both in England and New England from countless different angles, doing far more justice to the complexity of religious, social, economic, and cultural elements than has been possible in the past.



Perhaps one of the most important studies within this emphasis, Patrick Collinson's *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (1990) analyzes Puritanism's development. In the Genevan church, English refugees from Mary's regime studied under Calvin and Beza. Soon, Calvinist reform captivated bishops, duchesses, lay preachers, and printers in England. Collinson reveals that, by the time political hopes of reform had dimmed, Puritanism was imbedded in central communities such as Cambridge, enabling the laity and smaller clergy to continue without the support of the bishops, especially in New England.<sup>23</sup> Christopher Hill also addresses Puritan politics in *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (1964), interpreting Puritanism as the laity's and lesser clergy's response to hierarchical church control. A more recent monograph by Nicholas Tyacke, *Aspects of English Protestantism C. 1530-1700* (2001) notes that "toleration" was hardly the goal of Puritans, especially in Parliament where they fought surprising persistence for monarchical recognition of Puritan theology and practice within the Church of England.

These revisionist historians are exploring popular religion and culture, asking what attracted the average English worker or merchant or wealthy nobleman to the movement and how he or she participated.<sup>24</sup> The emphasis on understanding the Puritans as distinctive cultures, not just a set of doctrines, has opened up vast opportunities for further study. However, in reconstructing Puritan culture, mainstream historians have only begun to intersect with feminist scholarship of early modern women. More attention has been paid to Anne Bradstreet, as well as other published authors such as Elizabeth Jocelin and Anna Trapnel, but these women remain

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<sup>23</sup> Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 334.

<sup>24</sup> Charles L. Cohen, "The Post-Puritan Paradigm of Early American Religious History," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 54, no. 4, Religion in Early America (October 1997): 697-8.

isolated. Portrayed as extraordinary, they have little or no literary, political, or theological context. Tyacke and other similar scholars often separate practice from theology. The collective impetus for Puritan authorship is displaced.

Within feminist scholarship, prioritization of printed texts exacerbates this issue because many women writers circulated their works in manuscript. This medium has traditionally been considered “private” and therefore unconnected to the literary community.<sup>25</sup> Because of this, while popular religion and its significance to the Puritans are components of mainstream and feminist analysis, “religion” rarely includes a critical study of Puritan theology’s impact on manuscript content and production. This diminishes understanding of women writers, as historians miss the theological, artistic, and political implications of their manuscript works. Puritan women writers are associated with an exceptional, mystic dedication to godliness or with morbid, often repressed control issues springing from vague Calvinist fears. Amanda Porterfield’s *Female Piety in Puritan New England: The Emergence of Religious Humanism* (1992) explores the concept of “female piety” as a submissive, godly, gracious aspect of God’s character. Male ministers, says Porterfield, expressed this female piety through self-humbling while women like Bradstreet used piety to further self-expression. But because Porterfield focuses on “submission” as the defining trait of Puritan women, she ultimately dismisses Puritan women writers for their failure to meet feminist standards of rebellion.

Marilyn Westerkamp responds to Porterfield in her 1999 monograph, *Women in Early American Religion 1600-1850*. Although “women were lauded for passively filling subservient

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<sup>25</sup> Erica Longfellow observes that these “confusions exist in seventeenth-century studies, in which...a private role can mean interaction with family, friends, social equals, select members of a political faction, a religious mentor, a patron or God himself” (10). Authorship in “private” mediums enables a select audience of the manuscript. Erica Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 10.

spiritual roles,” she argues that Puritanism dignified women’s roles as wives and mothers and granted them spiritual status in their communities.<sup>26</sup> Westerkamp eventually sides with Porterfield in her conclusion that the hierarchical structure of Puritanism enforced passivity in women, eliminating active choices through the presence of an authority structure. She recognizes Bradstreet’s active voice but suggests subconscious rebellion in her later verse. Thus, Bradstreet is interpreted as an anomaly, a case study either for Puritan misogyny or proto-feminist subversion of religious restraint. Scholars fail to harmonize her artistry with her beliefs.<sup>27</sup>

Ultimately, recent revisionism has benefited the study of the Puritan movement through its attention to lay voices. Revisionist scholars have incorporated religious, economic, *and* social factors in Puritan cultural development. Nevertheless, neglect of female Puritan authors and the consistent reduction of Puritan theological diversity have led to marginalization of their spirituality, education, and literature. Valuable primary sources by Anne Bradstreet and her contemporaries have often been sidelined.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Marilyn J. Westerkamp, *Women in Early American Religion 1600-1580: The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions* (London: Routledge, 1999), 25.

<sup>27</sup> See Alice Henton, "Once Masculines... Now Feminines Awhile'," 304-9. See also Louisa Hall, "The Influence of Anne Bradstreet's Innovative Errors," *Early American Literature* 48, no. 1 (March 2013): 6, 23. Hall recognizes Bradstreet's stylistic creativity, but identifies "psychic strain" in Bradstreet's identity struggle as a poet.

<sup>28</sup> This thesis compares Bradstreet primarily to female Puritan authors, including Elizabeth Major, Hannah Allen, Lady Mary Carey, Anne Fenwick, Lucy Hutchinson, Elizabeth Jocelin, Lady Grace Mildmay, Julia Palmer, Lady Anne Southwell, Elizabeth Isham, and Lady Brilliana Harley. Of course, pertinent male writers are also included. Excellent scholars have analyzed Bradstreet in the context of poets like Philip Sidney, Edward Taylor, and Michael Wigglesworth, and this thesis relies on that valuable scholarship. Thus, the methodology applied in this project is not intended to replace influential Puritan texts simply because of their male authorship, but rather to demonstrate the existence and the possibilities of Puritan female authors. Women writers demonstrate both variety and harmony of style, genre, theology, politics, etc. within Puritan orthodoxy. It is hoped that this will enable readers and researchers to explore the potential of these texts as historical resources. On Bradstreet, Taylor, and Wigglesworth, see Jeffrey A. Hammond, *Sinful Self, Sainly Self: The Puritan Experience of Poetry*, 1st ed. (University of Georgia Press, 1993).

Historians both inside and outside the revisionist school have drawn attention to this issue. Paul Salzman's *Reading Early Modern Women's Writing* (2006), for example, explores different motivations, themes, and other factors that tie specific female authors together, sometimes across locations, eras, and genres. He points out the need to recognize these women writers not simply as textual sources, but also as interacting in a broader literary culture of authorship, translation, publishing, letter-writing, and critique. Similarly, Femke Molekamp, in her 2013 monograph, *Women and the Bible in Early Modern England: Religions Reading and Writing*, explores through detailed research the ways that women in England of a variety of religious persuasions, from Catholic to Puritan to sectarian, interacted with the Bible and created literature around its texts.

Further, authors such as Francis J. Bremer in *Lay Empowerment and the Development of Puritanism* (2015) have highlighted the explosion of literature from Puritans in England and also during New England's early development. Whether through theological treatises, sermons, testimonies, devotionals, letters, or meetings, Puritan laity acted as "priests" in community with each other. Drawing on Collinson's research among others, Bremer traces the contributions of significant laywomen and laymen, especially in print. Authors like Bremer and Molekamp move us a step closer to a holistic understanding of Puritanism.

Similarly, this project seeks to approach Anne Bradstreet's legacy holistically. Primary sources, including Bradstreet's own writings and the devotional, theological, poetic, and narrative writings of her fellow Puritans, take first place. In doing this, I seek first to identify Bradstreet's beliefs as expressed in her work and then to situate them within the literate Puritan community. Undoubtedly, this will reveal the limitations and prejudices held by many Puritan men and women. But it will also bring to light the orthodoxy that united them in active life,

legislation, colonization, and in Bradstreet's case, authorship. In her foreword to Jeannine Hensley's *The Works of Anne Bradstreet* (1967), scholar Adrienne Rich has accused Bradstreet's early work of "escaping from the conditions of her experience, rather than...an expression of what she felt and knew."<sup>29</sup> While the efforts of Rich and others have brought valuable attention to Bradstreet's authorship, Rich's categorical statement has caused many scholars to assume inauthenticity in the earlier poems. In other words, while Bradstreet certainly wrote the poems herself, she was detached from the orthodox beliefs she expressed. The possibility of a unified and varied legacy, a cohesive body of thought, in Bradstreet's poetry has not been explored.

Bradstreet's first published volume, *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung Up in America*, was printed for her brother-in-law John Woodbridge in London in 1650.<sup>30</sup> These poems were reprinted by in *Several Poems Compiled with Great Variety of Wit and Learning, Full of Delight* in 1678, six years after Bradstreet's death. Although Bradstreet did prepare and edit poems such as "The Four Monarchies" for the printing of *Several Poems*, she almost certainly did not have final say on titles, organization, commentary, and other editorial adjustments. Unfortunately, the only manuscript collection remaining is the Andover Manuscript, which includes Bradstreet's

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<sup>29</sup> "Hensley and Rich," says Elizabeth Ferszt, "are the combined critical voice that denigrated and dismissed Bradstreet's earlier, longer poems as tedium, yet praised her shorter, personal poems as minor jewels in the early American canon" (306). Repeatedly, this dismissal has encouraged generalized interpretations based on an isolated poem, perpetuating a misunderstanding of Bradstreet's textual unity. See Adrienne Rich, "Anne Bradstreet and Her Poetry," foreword to *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, by Anne Bradstreet, ed. Jeannine Hensley (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), xiv; Elizabeth Ferszt, "Transatlantic Dame School: The Early Poems of Anne Bradstreet as Pedagogy," *Women's Studies* 43, no. 3 (April 2014): 306.

<sup>30</sup> In transcription of primary sources, spelling variations have been preserved, and adjustments have been made for certain anachronistic letter usage. Italics have not been preserved except where they were used by the author to distinguish between his or her words and a quoted text.

memoirs and most personal poetry, and which was not published in either print edition.<sup>31</sup> This manuscript has been revised in Jeannine Hensley's 1967 edition of *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, which does not preserve distinctions between notes in Bradstreet's handwriting and notes and titles added by her son Simon.<sup>32</sup>

Originally, the poems in *The Tenth Muse* were not intended for print publication.<sup>33</sup>

Bradstreet had already circulated them in manuscript. However, certain poems in *Several Poems* seem to have been "private" in the twenty-first century sense. An editorial note heads the final section of *Several Poems*, including much of Bradstreet's devotional poetry, which reads:

"Several other poems made by the Author upon Diverse Occasions, were found among her Papers after her Death, which she never meant should come to publick view, among which, these following (at the desire of some friends that knew her well) are here inserted[.]"<sup>34</sup> These poems were likely for family circulation only. Similarly private are the poems, memoirs, and proverbs

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<sup>31</sup> References to poems within this text will include the line number *and* sequence (page) number for added clarity. See, for example, Bradstreet, "May. 13. 1657.," in *Meditations Divine and Morall: Manuscript, 1664-1672?*, ed. and trans. Simon Bradstreet, 1664, MS Am 1007.1, Stevens Memorial Library Deposit, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, accessed March 9, 2018, <http://id.lib.harvard.edu/aleph/009465790/catalog, seq. 59, lines 5.1-4>.

<sup>32</sup> At present, the most recent analysis of the Bradstreet canon is Margaret Olofson Thickstun's 2017 essay. Thickstun outlines in detail the evolution of the manuscript and print records and highlights serious errors in the 1967 edition edited by Jeannine Hensley, which has been widely used by students and scholars, emphasizing the need for attention to the earliest available print and manuscript texts. See Margaret Olofson Thickstun, "Contextualizing Anne Bradstreet's Literary Remains: Why We Need a New Edition of the Poems," *Early American Literature* 52, no. 2 (2017): 398-402.

<sup>33</sup> Bradstreet had avoided print publication, as she explains "The Author to Her Book," which she added to *Several Poems*. According to her account, *The Tenth Muse* manuscript was "snatcht...by friends, less wise then true /" (line 3). Woodbridge had already made a similar statement in his introduction to *The Tenth Muse*. See Bradstreet, "The Author to her Book," in *Several Poems Compiled with great variety of Wit and Learning, Full of Delight*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Printed by John Foster, 1678), line 3; John Woodbridge, "Kind Reader" in *The Tenth Muse*, n.p.

<sup>34</sup> See Bradstreet, *Several Poems*, 237.

in the Andover Manuscript, which were first published in 1867 in John Harvard Ellis's *The Works of Anne Bradstreet in Prose and Verse*.<sup>35</sup>

And yet even the Andover Manuscript was clearly intended for a family audience; "Meditations Divine and Morall" is dedicated to Simon Bradstreet and many of the accompanying poems were copied meticulously by Bradstreet's son Simon. Bradstreet's poetry expresses opinions on a variety of subjects including family life, religion, nature, female identity, and English politics, all of which provide insight on her participation in Puritan literary society.<sup>36</sup> Her texts deserve a place among other writers, women and men, who created Puritan culture.

To understand Bradstreet as an individual within the broader context of Puritanism, the first chapter of this project will introduce Bradstreet's family background, childhood influences, and education within a Puritan religious, political, and literary context. This chapter will uncover the heart of Bradstreet's self-interpretation: her physical and spiritual journeys followed parallel lines that would ultimately culminate in heavenly bliss.

Theology did not just ground Bradstreet's politics and faith; it was the core of her artistry. The second chapter of this project will address the contrast between "worldly things" and "spiritual things," often mistaken for Gnosticism in Puritan texts. As Bradstreet's writings

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<sup>35</sup> Most of these poems and prose pieces were still intended for a family audience. They include love poems to Bradstreet's husband, poems commemorating significant events, and advice to Bradstreet's children. A few scholars have gone so far as to suggest that these poems were also written for an audience outside Bradstreet's family. Timothy Whelan has argued that stylistic changes do not affect the publicity of later texts, but instead offer an intentionally simpler approach to more personal topics. See Timothy Whelan, "Contemplations': Anne Bradstreet's Homage to Calvin and Reformed Theology," *Christianity and Literature* 42, no. 1 (Autumn 1992): 42.

<sup>36</sup> This thesis explores the positive literary environment in which Bradstreet lived and wrote. In doing so, I do not wish to downplay the negative moral, social, and political aspects of Puritanism. However, because these issues are widely recognized, research in this thesis seeks to balance an awareness of the limitations of Puritanism with increased attention to Bradstreet's role in the diversity of its literary culture.

demonstrate, this concept was instead grounded in Calvinist theology that celebrated the goodness of God's creation, but ultimately considered it cursed. Bradstreet and her fellow Puritan women writers use this theology creatively to invest in political and historical issues while guiding themselves and their readers towards a heavenly kingdom.

Building on Bradstreet's application of Puritanism to art and politics, the last chapter of this project will examine the devotional aspect of Bradstreet's poetry. Remarkably, this quality is common to many Puritan authors including Anne Fenwick, Lady Grace Mildmay, and Hannah Allen for whom an intimate, trusting relationship with God was not only the catalyst, but the theme of their writing. Within the Puritan community, personal suffering was redeemed as God's compassionate guidance. To that end, authors like Bradstreet expressed themselves to and about the God they knew, and female authorship was welcomed because it witnessed God's goodness.

Ultimately, this project seeks to uncover the ways in which misrepresentation of Puritan women like Bradstreet has marginalized important historical texts. Generalized interpretations, cultural appropriation, or lack of acknowledgement in the historical community have skewed our understanding of female artists who come from a broad spectrum of beliefs and cultures. By understanding Bradstreet's individual and communal identity as active, rather than passive, this project seeks to promote objective scholarly analysis of Bradstreet that interprets her within a diverse literary context rather than assuming uniformity.



## Chapter 1

### Childhood, Education, and Influences

Anne Bradstreet was born Anne Dudley to Dorothy Yorke and Thomas Dudley in Lincolnshire in 1612. At the age of six or seven in 1618-19, Anne Dudley first “began to make consc. of [her] ways...”<sup>1</sup> Her description of this in her memoirs, written years later for her children, reveals Bradstreet’s sense of continuity. Puritan writers, women and men, had explored their own history both personally and in community through autobiographies, poetry, and theology, searching out the path to a life of true godliness. “What then is the true marke of one, which hath fellowship with God?” asks the “Church” in William Perkins’ *A Case of Conscience*. The Apostle John—and Perkins—reply, “*If we walk in the light* (lead the cours of our lives in sinceritie of life & doctrin) *wee have fellowship one with another.*”<sup>2</sup> This was the “conscience” by which Anne Dudley began to measure her life, first privately and then in community with others. It is not surprising that the established Puritan matron and author could look back and see a spiritual narrative of growth running parallel to the physical events of her life. Through the early influences of family, ministers, and literature, she developed a foundational belief in these

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<sup>1</sup> Bradstreet, “To my dear children,” in *Meditations Divine and Morall: Manuscript, 1664-1672?*, ed. and trans. Simon Bradstreet, 1664, MS Am 1007.1, Stevens Memorial Library Deposit, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, seq. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Italics preserved from the original distinguish quoted scripture from Perkins’ commentary. Perkins was a highly revered Puritan minister and author whose books, including *A Case for Conscience*, were widely circulated and reprinted. Lady Brilliana Harley, a Puritan aristocrat and correspondent who would have been in her early twenties during this time, frequently quotes or paraphrases Perkins in her commonplace book. Brilliana Harley, “The Commonplace Book of Brilliana Conway (1622),” in “Chapter 5: Brilliana, Lady Harley,” in *Flesh and Spirit: An Anthology of Seventeenth-century Women's Writing*, ed. Rachel Adcock, Sara Read, and Anna Ziomek (Manchester, UK: Manchester University Press, 2014), 126.

parallel narratives of the spiritual and physical realms, which in turn gave an interpretative purpose to her poetry.

Anne's father, Thomas Dudley, was steward to the Earl of Lincoln on whose considerable estate Anne spent her childhood. Here, in a house full of children and books, that she learned her letters and gained her first impressions of adult life. Bradstreet observed her own mother, a gentlewoman who was

To Servants wisely awful, but yet kind...  
A true Instructor of her Family,  
The which she ordered with dexterity.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, Anne enjoyed the privilege of education among the gentry. As a daughter of the steward, she would have played and studied with the Earl's young children under the protection of Elizabeth Clinton, mother to the Earl, whom Margaret Thickstun describes as "an intellectually active mother who also happened to be a published writer."<sup>4</sup> A scholar in her own right, Elizabeth Clinton wrote a treatise on the moral and scientific advantages of breastfeeding that reached a print audience in 1622. Scholars such as the editors of *Reading Early Modern Women* note Clinton's use of "biblical exemplars and traditional assertions of natural law" in this essay to urge upper-class women to set an example of moral, healthy child-care for both peers and servants.<sup>5</sup> Raised by these respected matriarchs, Bradstreet grew up in a household where women were respected and held positions of authority.

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<sup>3</sup> Bradstreet, "An Epitaph On my dear and ever honoured Mother Mrs. Dorothy Dudley, Who deceased Decemb. 27, 1643. and of her age, 61," in *Several Poems Compiled with great variety of Wit and Learning, Full of Delight*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Printed by John Foster, 1678), lines 6, 8-9.

<sup>4</sup> Thickstun, "Contextualizing Anne Bradstreet's Literary Remains: Why We Need a New Edition of the Poems," *Early American Literature* 52, no. 2 (2017): 393.

<sup>5</sup> See "Elizabeth (Knyvet) Clinton, Countess of Lincoln, *The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie (1622)*," in *Reading Early Modern Women: An Anthology of Texts in Manuscript and Print, 1550-1700*, ed. Helen Ostovich, Elizabeth Sauer, and Melissa Smith (2004), 109. See also

Interestingly, Catherine Bowden, in her article on female literacy during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, includes Elizabeth Clinton in a list of influential, literate women of the Queen's Privy Chamber.<sup>6</sup> During her service to Elizabeth I, Clinton corresponded with significant government leaders; gifts from the monarch also suggest that Clinton was a valuable member of the royal court.<sup>7</sup> This political involvement was passed down from mother to son. As a high-ranking and influential family, the Lincolns took their responsibility seriously to support Puritan reforms. In doing so, they were, of course, acting in harmony with the broader Puritan movement. For years, Puritans had worked within Parliament and the Church of England, but changes in ecclesiastical leadership, including the appointment of William Laud as Archbishop of London in 1628, threatened them with civil persecution.<sup>8</sup>

Puritanism was more or less established in Lincolnshire at the time. Patrick Collinson writes that, although Puritanism has so often been associated with resistance to authority, "one could speak of sixty or seventy years of puritan government in some of the most populous areas of England," and goes so far as to say that "[s]ome diocese—York, Lincoln, Norwich—enjoyed a succession of radically protestant bishops."<sup>9</sup> Supported by the resident nobility, Puritan ministers reformed church ceremonies, encouraged piety, and arranged lectures on weekdays. Now, clergy and laymen alike anticipated a gathering storm of controversy. Charles I's

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Virginia Brackett, "'The Countesse of Lincolne's Nurserie' as Inspiration for Anne Bradstreet," *Notes and Queries* 42, no. 3 (September 1995): 364-5.

<sup>6</sup> Caroline Bowden, "Women as Intermediaries: An Example of the Use of Literacy in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *History of Education* 22, no. 3 (September 1, 1993): 217.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 217.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Marshall, *Reformation England 1480-1642*, 2nd ed. (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 218.

<sup>9</sup> Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 60.

legislation continued to steer government farther away from Puritan ideals. Their hopes of internal transformation diminished, the Earl and Thomas Dudley turned to emigration as a possible outlet for reformed piety.

Poems in *The Tenth Muse* and *Several Poems* reveal Bradstreet's close relationship with and deep respect for her father. She dedicated her manuscript quaternions to him, later published in *The Tenth Muse*, with an enthusiastic poem where she famously references Dudley's "four sisters" to her poems. A marginal note, perhaps by Bradstreet's brother-in-law John Woodbridge, identifies this as Dudley's own quaternion titled "on the four parts of the world."<sup>10</sup> Her elegy on his death represents him as an astute politician who worked tirelessly to improve the colony:

One of thy Founders, him New England know...  
Who spent his state, his strength, & years with care  
That After-comers in them might have share.  
True Patriot of this little Commonweal,  
Who is't can tax thee ought, but for thy zeal?<sup>11</sup>

The final stanzas of Bradstreet's elegy commemorate him as "A Magazine of History" who "was both pious, just and wise..."<sup>12</sup> Throughout, her admiration for her father's wisdom, political acumen, piety, and learning is evident. These qualities provide significant insight into her interest in politics and history.

Cotton Mather's eulogistic biography of Dudley in *Magnalia Christi Americana* traces Dudley's early life in "the Family of the Earl of Northampton" to his career as a law clerk and

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<sup>10</sup> Unfortunately, this manuscript remains undiscovered. See Bradstreet, "To her most Honoured Father Thomas Dudley Esq; these humbly presented," in *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America or Severall Poems, Compiled with Great Variety of Wit and Learning, Full of Delight*. (London: Printed for Stephen Bowtell at the Sign of the Bible in Popes Head-Alley, 1650), lines 1-4.

<sup>11</sup> Bradstreet, "To the Memory of my dear and ever honoured Father Thomas Dudley Esq; Who deceased, July 31. 1653. And of his Age, 77," in *Several Poems*, lines 1.23, 25-8.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 2.5, 2.

military captain.<sup>13</sup> Dudley evidenced a gift for politics through his rapid ascension to power in the New England government. In 1630, when the Dudleys and Bradstreets sailed for New England on the *Arbella*, Dudley was a founding member of the Massachusetts Bay Company with the Earl of Lincoln's financial support.<sup>14</sup> The company selected him as deputy governor before the *Arbella* sailed, and his astute leadership would ultimately induce colonists to choose him as governor in place of John Winthrop, where Dudley served his first term in 1634.<sup>15</sup> The status of Bradstreet's father enabled her immediate recognition in the New England community as a member of a well-connected and powerful family.

Interestingly enough, Cotton Mather's brief biography of Dudley in *Magnalia* references a second poem found in Dudley's pocket at his death in 1653. A series of simple rhymed couplets, this manuscript predicts Dudley's death, demonstrating his concern with his own mortality. Further, the poem expresses the author's concern for his wife and children's physical and spiritual safety. Burdened to the last by religious and civil conflict, Dudley advises them to "Hate Heresie, make Blessed Ends. /" that they may "live with Joy agen. /"<sup>16</sup> The final lines of the poem also reveal Dudley's preoccupation with New England politics. He represents New England as an example to the world, watched by "Men of God in Courts and Churches" who wait anxiously to determine whether New England will forsake God and surrender to heretical

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<sup>13</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, ed. Kenneth B. Murdock and Elizabeth W. Miller, Book II: Ecclesiarum Clypei (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), 229-30.

<sup>14</sup> See Wendy Martin, "Anne Bradstreet's Poetry: A Study of Subversive Piety," in *Shakespeare's Sisters: Feminist Essays on Women Poets*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), 20.

<sup>15</sup> Mather, *Magnalia*, Book II, 231-2.

<sup>16</sup> Thomas Dudley, "Dim Eyes, Deaf Ears, Cold Stomach, shew," in Mather, *Magnalia*, Book II, lines 12, 14.

influences.<sup>17</sup> It is clear that, to the very last, Dudley battled to preserve the colony's sanctity. His vision for New England echoes that of John Winthrop's famous "A Modell of Christian Charity," where he writes, "The end is to improve our lives to doe more service to the Lord; the comforte and encrease of the body of Christe, whereof we are members; that ourselves and posterity may be the better preserved from the common corruptions of this evill world..."<sup>18</sup> It was these "common corruptions" that Dudley, according to his daughter, confronted tirelessly during his time as governor.<sup>19</sup> Years later, the stability of his people consumed the aging politician's thoughts.

All this was far in the future for Anne Dudley, age seven. Undoubtedly she was an attentive listener—later, a contributor—to discussions between her parents and members of the Earl's household. Her memoirs recall an early interest in knowing and understanding the beliefs that motivated those around her. She quickly established the moral compass that Puritans deeply

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., lines 15-8.

<sup>18</sup> John Winthrop, "A Model of Christian Charity," 1630, TS 3rd Series 7:31-48, Hanover Historical Texts Collection, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 45.

<sup>19</sup> The popular rebellion in Boston and other New England cities during the 1750s and 60s contrasts starkly on the surface to the strong concern of Puritans like John Winthrop, Anne Bradstreet, and Thomas Dudley for an orderly society united by principle against division and invasion. Despite this, scholars of the revolution have used Puritanism to demonstrate the importance of religious influences on colonial America in a variety of ways. Early Massachusetts leaders intentionally created a government supported by godly (male) citizens that, in theory at least, worked with ecclesiastical authority rather than controlling it. Patterned after the city states of the Continent, this structure preceded democracy, as Marilynne Robinson and other scholars have pointed out. Daniel L. Dreisbach and Mark David Hall have applied this Puritan heritage effectively to American revolutionary history in their 2014 collection of essays, *Faith and the Founders of the American Republic*, which employs Puritanism as a point of intersection between religion and politics. They are preceded by Alan Heimert's *Religion and the American Mind* (1966). Texts such as these effectively explore the outworkings of Puritan theology; however, they often assume homogeneity within Puritan literature and culture. Regarding Genevan influence on the government of Massachusetts Bay, see Marilynne Robinson, "Marguerite De Navarre," in *The Death of Adam: Essays on Modern Thought* (New York: Picador, 2005), 177-8.

valued, later writing that she had been “troubled at ye neglect of private Dutyes” and “found much comfort in reading y<sup>e</sup> Scriptures...”<sup>20</sup> Her earliest forays into literature thus began with a diverse group of biblical texts that ranged from poetry to philosophy to historical narrative. As her studies progressed, she would have explored medical treatises,<sup>21</sup> famous Latin historians, Reformed theologians, and Elizabethan poets such as Guillaume Du Bartas<sup>22</sup> and Sir Philip

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<sup>20</sup> Bradstreet, “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 47.

<sup>21</sup> Scholars of Bradstreet have noted her remarkable interaction with scientific and medical theories of her day in poems of *The Tenth Muse*. Lucas Hardy notes that John Harvard Ellis, editor of the 1867 edition of Bradstreet’s verse, first identified Dr. Helkiah Crooke’s *Microcosmographia: A Description of the Body of Man* as a significant text which Bradstreet explores in “Of the foure Humours in Mans constitution” and “The Four Ages of Man.” According to Hardy, “In allowing pain and disease to impact the brain, Bradstreet establishes a new connection between her Puritan piety and the body by redefining cognition as a personal phenomenon and not as a humoral abstraction” (328). This enables Bradstreet to claim illness as a catalyst for spiritual development and devotion to God, rather than, as Cooke seems to suggest, an isolated anatomical event. Branka Arsić has applied this thesis to suggest an extreme conflict in Bradstreet’s poetry where “the brain appears as weak, wounded, incurable, foolish, tired, and simply bad” (1009). While Arsić’s thesis perhaps reads into individual lines rather than acknowledging Bradstreet’s references to medicine in context, both Hardy and Arsić suggest possibilities for further analysis of Puritan female authors such as Elizabeth Clinton and Hannah Allen in relation to medicine and human anatomy. See Branka Arsić, “Brain-ache: Anne Bradstreet on Sensing,” *ELH* 80, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 1009-043; Lucas Hardy, “No Cure: Anne Bradstreet’s Frenzied Brain,” *Women’s Studies* 43, no. 3 (April 1, 2014): 318-31. See also Bradstreet, “Of the foure Humours in Mans constitution,” in *The Tenth Muse*, 21-40; Bradstreet, “The Four Ages of Man,” in *The Tenth Muse*, 41-55; Hannah Allen, *A Narrative of God’s Gracious Dealings with That Choice Christian Mrs. Hannah Allen (afterwards Married to Mr. Hatt,) Reciting The Great Advantages the Devil Made of Her Deep Melancholy, and the Triumphant Victories, Rich and Sovereign Graces, God Gave Her over All His Stratagems and Devices* (London: Printed by John Wallis, 1683), 70-1; Elizabeth Clinton, Countess of Lincoln, *The Countesse of Lincolnes Nurserie*, ed. Thomas Lodge (Oxford: Printed by John Lichfield, and James Short, Printers to the Famous Universitie [sic], 1622).

<sup>22</sup> Guillaume Du Bartas was a reformed French poet whose works were highly regarded in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England. His poetry was translated into English, and several of these translations transitioned to print. While we are unable to identify the exact text studied by Anne Bradstreet, she references him often in *The Tenth Muse*: in “To her most Honoured Father,” she observes that the broad scope of her subject matter might suggest “one Bartas was my friend... /” (line 36). While she acknowledges his influence, however, Bradstreet claims her identity as a poet in her own right. Congratulatory poems by fellow Puritans at the beginning of *The Tenth Muse* applaud Bradstreet’s imitation of Du Bartas as a sign of her literary prowess. “The Auth’resse,” declares Nathaniel Ward, “was a right Du Bartas Girle. /” (line 12). See

Sidney.<sup>23</sup> In addition to her studies, Bradstreet would have attended sermons several times a week with her family.

“Gadding to sermons” was an essential component of Bradstreet’s education. In Lincolnshire, under the sponsorship of Puritan-minded aristocracy, religion was not simply a private matter for table-talk or obsessive journaling. Public preaching, worship, and spiritual discussion applied Puritan doctrine to every aspect of life, from the personal need for salvation from sin to the communal need for salvation from selfish injustice.<sup>24</sup> Through the godly discourse of local ministers, Puritan families participated each Sunday in a community of worship. Discussions about theology, politics, and practical Christian living would have continued in the Dudley household during the week with Dorothy Dudley who, for her daughter, embodied the close relationship of private religion with public action:

The publick meeting s [sic] ever did frequent,  
And in her Closet constant hours she spent;

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Nathaniel Ward, “Mercury shew’d Apollo, Bartas Book,” in *The Tenth Muse*, lines 1-3, 12. See also Bradstreet, “To her most Honoured Father Thomas Dudley Esq; these humbly presented,” in *The Tenth Muse*, lines 35-8; Guillaume de Salluste Du Bartas, seigneur, *Bartas: His Devine Weekes and Workes Translated: & Dedicated to the Kings Most Excellent Majestie*, trans. Iosuah Sylvester (London: Printed by Humfrey Lownes, 1605).

<sup>23</sup> Nandra Perry observes that “According to Sidney, the chief value of poetry lies in its unique ability to redirect the fallen will toward godliness (and by extension, toward God Himself)” (395). On Puritan influences and Calvinist theology in Sidney’s poetry, see Nandra Perry, “Imitatio and Identity: Thomas Rogers, Philip Sidney, and the Protestant Self,” *English Literary Renaissance* 35, no. 3 (September 2005): 395.

<sup>24</sup> Puritan education had a significant impact on socioeconomics, as Christopher Hill illustrates. Through lecturing and practical industry, Puritans were able to create an alternate lifestyle through communal discipline and the leadership of preachers. Puritanism connected people across social strata because it maintained accountability. Drawing on Morgan’s analysis of the Puritan family, Hill ultimately attributes the reshaping of the working and middle class society in England to the community and discipline of the Puritan movement. See Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (New York: Schocken Books, 1964), 46-67, 88-90. See also Edmund S. Morgan, “Chapter 6: The Family in the Social Order,” in *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England*, First Harper Torchbook ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), 133-60.



Religious in all her words and wayes...<sup>25</sup>

Anne would have listened to scriptural analysis and lectures several times a week, sometimes from university graduates, in addition to her formal studies.

We know from Cotton Mather's account that Thomas and Dorothy Dudley were members of Lincolnshire churches lead by ministers such as John Dod, John Winston, and Robert Cleaver.<sup>26</sup> Early in the seventeenth century, these men would have functioned as Puritans within the Church of England who, after ordination, quietly adjusted Church practice and liturgy to reflect Puritan theology. While reforms varied, they generally involved stricter requirements for church membership, which was enforced by withholding communion from members who appeared unregenerate. The Puritan ministers of Lincolnshire may also have omitted ritualized elements of the service and the Book of Prayer. Sermons, lectures, and conferences would have created a stronger sense of community.

Unfortunately, Puritans within the Church would no longer live and let live. The crown grew increasingly hostile to individualized worship, and church leaders such as Archbishop William Laud gladly enforced centralization of ecclesiastical authority. Many Puritan leaders welcomed the challenge. After all, institutionalized reform had been their goal in the first place. When James I took the throne in 1602, Lincolnshire ministers supported open reform, as notes attest from sermons by John Dod and Robert Cleaver. On Puritan duty in the face of threatened physical and civil danger, Dod asserts that "whosoever would walke in a godly course, should looke for troubles, and that sundry waies: yea and to have his very life stricke at by such as are

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<sup>25</sup> Bradstreet, "An Epitaph On my dear and ever honoured Mother," in *Several Poems*, lines 10-2.

<sup>26</sup> Mather, *Magnalia*, Book II, 230. On Dod's suspension from ministry, see *Ibid.*, pg. 230, 6n.

enemies to the Gospell of Christ...<sup>27</sup> Sources like these would have been heavily revised by note-takers and editors, but they do provide at least a glimpse of the reformed and reforming ideas under which Anne Dudley developed her political opinions. As a child, she read texts including Sir Walter Raleigh's *History of the World* and, most likely, ancient historians such as Homer and Aristotle.<sup>28</sup> From these books, she became familiar with the persecution and violence that had attended religious conflict throughout history.

Another significant influence during Anne's childhood and teenage years was the ministry of John Cotton, then in Boston, England, where the Dudleys relocated temporarily before returning to Lincolnshire.<sup>29</sup> In 1633, only three years after the Dudleys and Bradstreets left for New England, Cotton too would cross the Atlantic to join the colony there. Like John Winthrop, Cotton sought theological moderation in order to preserve Christian charity and unity; both men wrote essays on moderation that were "carried in manuscript across the Atlantic in the early 1630s."<sup>30</sup> Practically, of course, moderation would prove harder to maintain. By 1636, John Cotton was minister and spiritual advisor to Anne Hutchinson who, with several other members of the Boston congregation there, began to express concern about co-minister John Wilson's

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<sup>27</sup> John Dod and John Winston, "The First Sermon," in John Winston, Robert Cleaver, and John Dod, *Two Sermons on the Third of the Lamentations of Ieremie: Preached at Hanwell in the First Yeare of His Majesties Range, 1602. The One by I.D. the Other by R.C.* (London: Felix Kingston for Ionas Man, 1608), 26. It is possible, but not confirmed, that John Winston, the editor and revisor of these sermon notes, is the same John Winston who ministered to the Dudleys in Northampton.

<sup>28</sup> Jane D. Eberwein, "Civil War and Bradstreet's 'Monarchies,'" *Early American Literature* 26, no. 2 (January 1, 1991): 121; Wendy Martin, "Anne Bradstreet's Poetry: A Study of Subversive Piety," 26.

<sup>29</sup> Mather, *Magnalia*, Book II, 231.

<sup>30</sup> Robert McCluer Calhoun, "Political Moderation: An Introduction," in *Political Moderation in America's First Two Centuries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 16.

“emphasis on human actions” as a sign of saving grace.<sup>31</sup> Hutchinson seems to have been a well-educated, eloquent woman. The meetings she held at her house, mainly attended by women, were hardly inconsistent with the informal “conference” that was a popular method of communal worship and study among English Puritans.<sup>32</sup> Throughout her famous trial by the colony’s General Council including then governor John Winthrop and deputy governor Thomas Dudley, Hutchinson expressed her willingness to “submit to any truth” that her examiners could conclusively prove from scripture.<sup>33</sup>

Of course, Hutchinson’s challenge pressured the Council to answer her, rather than dismiss her. As seventeenth-century New Englanders, Council members were straining to create a commonwealth in the wilderness under the watchful gaze of their mother country. Unity, John Winthrop had warned, was essential to the colony’s survival. It was also essential to Winthrop’s position as governor. Aware of the Council’s political dilemma, Cotton endeavored to diffuse the situation by reassuring them that Hutchinson’s intentions were godly and calculated to encourage humble spiritual zeal. Hutchinson, however, labored under the delusion that scriptural orthodoxy, rather than party politics, was at stake. She continued to defend herself earnestly from the

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<sup>31</sup> See Francis J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards*, Revised ed. (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2013), 66.

<sup>32</sup> Recent historiography led by Francis Bremer has highlighted the importance of the conference, written and verbal, in English Puritanism. Bremer writes that, “One of the consequences of valuing the insight of each individual— layman or clergyman— as potentially Spirit-guided was that each conference of fellow saints would be a forum in which rival claims would be presented in the hope that through discussion a greater understanding of the truth would arise.” Early New England culture seems to have recreated this concept; the Antinomian Controversy, however, is widely seen as the catalyst for religious homogeneity. See Bremer, *Lay Empowerment and the Development of Puritanism* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire (GB): Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 47.

<sup>33</sup> "Appendix Number II. November 1637. The Examination of Mrs. Ann Hutchinson at the Court at Newtown.," in *The History of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay, from the Charter of King William and Queen Mary, in 1691, Until the Year 1750.*, by Thomas Hutchinson, vol. 1 (Boston, NE: Thomas & John Fleet, 1767), 485.

original charge of doctrinal error. In response, Thomas Dudley proclaimed her a political threat: “Mrs. Hutchinson hath so forestalled the minds of many by their resort to her meeting that now she hath a potent party in the country. Now if all these things have endangered us as from that foundation..., why we must take away the foundation and the building will fall.”<sup>34</sup> Unable to answer Hutchinson theologically, the Council banished her to ensure social stability and perhaps to reinforce their dominance. John Cotton, wiser for the experience, avoided controversial doctrinal issues and gradually regained his status as a beloved spiritual leader.

What Anne Bradstreet thought of the affair at the time remains unclear. Her writings never reference the Antinomian Controversy directly, but her elegiac praises of her father’s virtues suggest that she shared his concern for the stability and order of Old England and New at the expense of quarrelsome dissenters:

To Truth a shield, to right a Wall,  
To Sectaryes a whip and Maul...<sup>35</sup>

Bradstreet’s language here could mean that, like her father, she may have viewed Hutchinson’s conduct as politically threatening and thus distinct from the orthodox conference. However, it is more likely that Bradstreet agreed with her husband Simon, who took a much milder position than his father-in-law during the trial. When Anne Hutchinson declared that her meetings were “a free will offering” to God, Simon Bradstreet suggested that she “ought to forbear it because it gives offence” to fellow saints, rather than on doctrinal or political grounds.<sup>36</sup> When she agreed to “further consider” this for the sake of others, Simon Bradstreet assured her, “I am not against

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 488.

<sup>35</sup> Bradstreet, “To the Memory of my dear and ever honoured Father,” in *Several Poems*, 2.3-4.

<sup>36</sup> “Appendix Number II,” 487.

all women's meetings but do think them to be lawful."<sup>37</sup> Before Hutchinson could answer, however, Dudley intervened, steering the conversation back towards Hutchinson's alleged crimes.

Simon's view appears more consistent than Thomas Dudley's with Anne Bradstreet's strong commitment both to theological discussion and political stability. "A Dialogue between Old England and New," written five or six years after Hutchinson's trial, displays Bradstreet's concern for "the breach of sacred Lawes..." by political leaders, but also an awareness that reform sometimes "must be done by Gospel, not by law."<sup>38</sup> Further, Bradstreet's personal poetry demonstrates her confidence in applying Calvinist theology to interpret herself and her circumstances for the benefit of others. Understandably, some scholars have extrapolated from the controversy an overarching spirit of misogyny in the Puritan movement, especially given the antagonistic statements of Dudley and Winthrop.<sup>39</sup> It is possible that the Hutchinson affair inspired increased scrutiny of women in New England communities.<sup>40</sup> However, the sheer number of Puritan women writers circulating literature at the time suggests that Hutchinson was the exception, rather than the norm. She was a dangerous political threat, and in response male leaders would have felt justified in playing the gender card.

Bradstreet, meanwhile, continued to write. As a woman, she had no problem writing publicly and, like Hutchinson, did not consider speech incompatible with humility. It is quite

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 487.

<sup>38</sup> Bradstreet, "A Dialogue between Old England and New, concerning their present troubles," in *The Tenth Muse*, lines 4.34, 6.20.

<sup>39</sup> See Michael G. Ditmore, "Bliss Lost, Wisdom Gained: Contemplating Emblems and Enigmas in Anne Bradstreet's 'Contemplations'," *Early American Literature* 42, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 52-3.

<sup>40</sup> Amanda Porterfield, *Female Piety in Puritan New England: The Emergence of Religious Humanism*, Religion in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 104.

probable that her confidence, in part, stemmed from the spiritual influence of John Cotton.

Known among modern historians for his ambiguous, placatory role in the Antinomian Controversy, he also represents in many ways the “Cambridge puritan” described by Patrick Collinson, William Haller, and H. C. Porter, a “physician of the soul” seeking to guide members of his congregation on a path of faith.<sup>41</sup>

As part of Cotton’s congregation in Boston, England, young Anne Dudley would have experienced a ministry that emphasized God’s compassionate presence. Cotton was not only a gifted minister; he also wrote prolifically on the “covenant of grace,” urging weak and fearful Puritan Christians to take comfort in God’s forgiveness. In *The Covenant of Grace*, published after Cotton’s death, he references the biblical King David, a gifted poet whose sins of adultery and murder brought down God’s curse. Cotton points out that, despite David’s crimes and the crimes of his family, God willingly forgave him and even blessed him: “Though hee and his house grow not, though they be transitory, disordered, unsettled, yet Gods Covenant to him may continue steadfast, firm and sure, and this is all his desire.”<sup>42</sup> In passages like these, Cotton does not seek to downplay the past atrocities of David—and, by extension, his listeners—nor does he excuse the sin. Instead, Cotton argues that God chooses to forgive his people anyway and turns their hearts to him.

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<sup>41</sup> See Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 128, 15n.

<sup>42</sup> John Cotton, “The Saints Comforts against Personall and Domesticall Infirmities, &c.,” in *The Covenant of Gods Free Grace, Most Sweetly Unfolded, and Comfortably Applied to a Disquieted Soul, from That Text of 2. Sam. 23. Ver. 5. Also a Doctrinall Conclusion, That There Is in All Such Who Are Effectually Called, In-dwelling Spiritual Gifts and Graces, Wrought and Created in Them by the Holy Ghost*, by John Cotton and John Davenport (London: Printed for Matthew Simmons, 1645), 2-3. William Stoeber, while he attributes to Cotton a heterodox anti-works position, provides an excellent summary of Cotton’s concerns about New England tendencies. See William K. B. Stoeber, “Nature, Grace and John Cotton: The Theological Dimension in the New England Antinomian Controversy,” *Church History* 44, no. 1 (March 1975): 28, 30.

Some have deduced from the dramatic conflict surrounding the Antinomian Controversy that Cotton's emphasis on God's forgiveness and faithfulness was radically, theologically deviant. Cotton could certainly adjust his message to his hearer and appears to have conciliated New England magistrates by avoiding too much emphasis on freedom in Christ.<sup>43</sup> However, Cotton's individuality lies, as Deborah Lewis Schneider points out, in his personality rather than in heterodox doctrine. "By temperament," for example, New England minister Thomas Shepard "appears to have focused his preaching on punishment rather than reward...preferring the stick to the carrot."<sup>44</sup> Cotton, on the other hand, chose the carrot. While he warned his hearers of God's justice and urged them to grieve for past sins, he assured them that they could have confidence in the covenant of grace because of God's "absolute and independent sovereignty" and "everlasting love."<sup>45</sup> God's justice was not incompatible with his mercy, nor did he leave the elect to search for salvation without assurance. This was the recurring theme of sermons in Boston where Anne Dudley worshiped, meditated, and studied.

Under these influences Bradstreet's childhood took shape around her personal relationship with God. Puritans believed that the spiritual journey of the believer was the source of events large and small in their lives. Their writings testify to a consciousness of God's guiding hand in the history of humanity, a history that might, some thought, culminate in Christ's kingdom during their lifetime. From Christianity they sought sanctification from sin, purpose in public life, and comfort in suffering. All these, John Cotton and John Dod had assured the

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<sup>43</sup> On the diverse audiences of Cotton's ministry, see Michael J. Colacurcio, "Primitive Comfort: The Spiritual Witness of John Cotton," *ELH* 67, no. 3, An Americanist Issue in Honor of Larzer Ziff (Fall 2000): 655, 657-8. On Cotton and the lay community in New England, see Bremer, *Lay Empowerment and the Development of Puritanism*, 85-6.

<sup>44</sup> Deborah Lucas Schneider, "Anne Hutchinson and Covenant Theology," *The Harvard Theological Review* 103, no. 4 (October 2010): 497.

<sup>45</sup> Cotton, "The Saints Comforts against Personall and Domesticall Infirmities, &c.," 14.

Dudleys and other faithful hearers, God would gladly provide. As an older woman, Bradstreet frankly admits to her children that she “found [her] heart more carnall, & sitting loose from God” in her early teens despite her meditations and prayers to God during her first illness. Even after God healed her from smallpox, she did not repay him with gratitude that matched his gift.<sup>46</sup> But these lapses in holiness did not afflict her with years of cruel torment. She did not, like the Puritan writer Hannah Allen, attempt suicide and commit self-harm as just punishment for her own unworthiness.<sup>47</sup> Instead, she describes her sins, sicknesses, and efforts at holiness as “God’s dealing with me,” a path that she travels with God, according to his will and under his guidance.<sup>48</sup> She believes that he intends her spiritual and physical experiences for good.

Bradstreet’s positive view of God’s sovereignty is unsurprising in the context of Puritan culture. Records of Bradstreet’s life, including her own, show a direct connection between her spiritual growth and education. From her poetry, of course, literary influences are easy to identify: the Geneva Bible, Sir Walter Raleigh’s *History of the World*, the poetry of Guillaume Du Bartas, Sir Philip Sidney’s *Defense of Poesy*. Anne grew up in a literary world, a world of books that explored the spiritual and natural spheres. As demonstrated in “The Four Ages of Man,” “The Four Elements,” and other poems, education piqued her desire not just to learn, but also to interpret current events and ideas. As a child, she would have been taught, probably at

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<sup>46</sup> Bradstreet, *Meditations*, seq. 47.

<sup>47</sup> Hannah Allen’s case demonstrates the ability of the Puritan community to come alongside suffering saints and allay excessive grief for sin. Allen records the responses of her mother, aunt, brother, friends, and ministers to her depression, many of whom confronted her fears with Scriptural references to God’s grace and all of whom tried to protect her from intrusive thoughts, rather than encouraging stereotypical “Puritan” self-flagellation. Fear and guilt were not always considered healthy, as in Allen’s case, where family, friends, and ministers worked to find spiritual *and* physical remedies for what they considered a mental and bodily illness. See Hannah Allen, *A Narrative of God’s Gracious Dealings*, 67-72.

<sup>48</sup> Bradstreet, “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 47.



her mother's knee, to seek God for wisdom. Like other Puritans, she would have responded to her reading through "literary production" that synthesized her studies and surroundings.<sup>49</sup> Puritan theology provided the lens through which Bradstreet viewed historical events as cyclic power struggles that would ultimately usher in Christ's kingdom. Theology also informs her definition of personal spirituality as prayerful, godly living in God's sight.

Seeing herself as one of Christ's elect believers, Anne Dudley knew that God would use trials and temptations to reveal his character to her. She could also seek the Holy Spirit's help to understand and apply scriptural principles to her world. This kind of analysis was widely encouraged by Puritan clergy who promoted sermon-gadding, discussion of spiritual things, and private devotions.<sup>50</sup> Through meditation, reflection, and family conferences, Anne would have had the opportunity to explore religion and theology in a welcoming environment. Rational truth was not knowable only by Puritan leaders; she could access it herself. The practice of independent and conversational study, increasingly common among laywomen in England, opened up a wealth of topics to Puritan women writers.<sup>51</sup> It is unlikely that this caused Bradstreet to "[experience] herself as the 'other,'" as Anne G. Myles has suggested.<sup>52</sup> Because the women around Anne Dudley enjoyed the Holy Spirit's guidance, they could explore and discuss theology, politics, romance, medicine, and mothering with authority based on solid doctrinal premises.

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<sup>49</sup> Thickstun, "Contextualizing Anne Bradstreet's Literary Remains," 394.

<sup>50</sup> See Bremer, *Lay Empowerment and the Development of Puritanism*, 8-9.

<sup>51</sup> David Norbrook, "Women, the Republic of Letters, and the Public Sphere in the Mid-Seventeenth Century," *Criticism* 46, no. 2, Special Issue: When Is a Public Sphere? (Spring 2004): 22.

<sup>52</sup> Anne G. Myles, "Queerly Lamenting Anne Bradstreet," *Women's Studies* 43, no. 3 (April 2014): 353.

Like these laywomen, Bradstreet took the role of narrator as well as actor in her personal poetry and memoirs. She believed that she could act according to God's will and thus play a part in his plan in the midst of hardship. Even when she expressed confusion, anger, or despair about her circumstances, the act of writing reinforced her agency. As one of the elect, she could make the choice to trust God, rather than withdrawing into passivity. We know that her "heart rose" at the challenges she faced in New England, and that she was deeply discouraged.<sup>53</sup> But while Bradstreet does not disguise her apprehensions, her poetry explores enthusiastically the world around her. In doing so, she builds on the foundation of Puritan literary experience. Parallel to physical adventures and challenges runs a spiritual journey of blessing that fills the natural world with meaning.

While scholars have long posited Bradstreet's singularity in the Puritan world, extant manuscripts and printed texts suggest harmony, rather than discord, with Puritan beliefs.<sup>54</sup> As has already been seen, Bradstreet grew up in a positive environment for study and self-expression through writing. Godly meditation was ingrained into the very fabric of her culture, and the presence of the Holy Spirit in her gave her the ability to recognize truth through prayerful study.

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<sup>53</sup> Bradstreet, "To my dear children," in *Meditations*, seq. 47.

<sup>54</sup> Scholars who take this view often argue either that Bradstreet's poetry as a whole ignores the Puritan literary heritage or that Bradstreet's later poems suppress emotional suffering. While neither of these perspectives denies positive support from individuals in the Puritan community, they tend to exclude the possibility of a gender-inclusive Puritan literary culture. On Bradstreet's argued rejection of Puritan literary heritage, see Henton, "'Once Masculines... Now Feminines Awhile': Gendered Imagery and the Significance of Anne Bradstreet's 'The Tenth Muse,'" *The New England Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (June 2012): 303-4. On suppressed agnosticism in Bradstreet's later verse, see Westerkamp, "Chapter 2: Wives and mothers in the colonial New England landscape," in *Women in Early American Religion 1600-1850: The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions, Christianity and Society in the Modern World* (London: Routledge, 1999), 29; Susan Wiseman, "Anne Bradstreet's Poetry and Providence: Earth, Wind, and Fire," in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558-1680*, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 137-40.

In spite of this, Puritan women faced very real limitations in seventeenth-century England. In a famous stanza of her prologue to *The Tenth Muse*, Bradstreet observes dryly that she is

“obnoxious to each carping tongue,

Who says, my hand a needle better fits...  
For such despight they cast on female wits:  
If what I doe prove well, it won't advance,  
They'l say its stolne, or else, it was by chance.<sup>55</sup>

That men often had the upper hand through education, by law, and perhaps even biologically, Bradstreet openly acknowledged. She did not expect to avoid scrutiny in a world where “misogynistic verse” was a popular collection piece for commonplace books and manuscript anthologies.<sup>56</sup> It is likely that this contributed to her concerns about print publication, which she voices in the “Apology” she had prepared for *Several Poems* before her death.<sup>57</sup> Manuscript circulation allowed Bradstreet to control her audience. Educated, appreciative readers like Simon Bradstreet, Thomas Dudley, and John and Mercy Woodbridge would understand her historical references and would share her interest in science and art.<sup>58</sup>

Further, prefatory poems accompanying *The Tenth Muse* demonstrate a variety of positive responses to female authorship, such as “Upon the Author,” by “C.B.” who declared,

None but her self must dare commend her parts,  
Whose sublime brain's the Synopsis of Arts...  
False Fame, belye their Sex, no more, it can,  
Surpasse, or parallel, the best of man.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Bradstreet, “The Prologue,” in *The Tenth Muse*, 5.1-2, 4-6.

<sup>56</sup> Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1995), 56-7.

<sup>57</sup> Thickstun, “Contextualizing Anne Bradstreet’s Literary Remains,” 401.

<sup>58</sup> According to Jeannine Hensley who references nineteenth century scholar Samuel Kettell, Anne Bradstreet’s sister Mercy Woodbridge seems to have written a commendatory poem on *The Tenth Muse* that has since been lost. See Jeannine Hensley, “Anne Bradstreet’s Wreath of Thyme,” introduction to *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, by Anne Bradstreet, ed. Jeannine Hensley (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), xxiv, 1n.

<sup>59</sup> C.B., “Upon the Author,” in *The Tenth Muse*, 3-4, 7-8.

These and similar verses suggest a deep respect for Bradstreet's authorial skill. Nearly a century later, in *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Cotton Mather would digress from his biography of Thomas Dudley to praise the poetry of Dudley's daughter "whose Poems, divers times Printed, have afforded a grateful Entertainment unto the Ingenious, and a Monument for her memory beyond the Stateliest Marbles."<sup>60</sup> Margaret Olofson Thickstun has noted that Bradstreet's brother-in-law, John Woodbridge, defends his printing of *The Tenth Muse* which "she [had] resolved should never in such a manner see the Sun" on the grounds that another publisher was planning an unauthorized, incomplete copy.<sup>61</sup> If another publisher saw a market for Bradstreet's poems and had access to them, this tells us a great deal about the popularity with which the manuscript had already been received.<sup>62</sup> Woodbridge also expresses hope "to pleasure those that earnestly desired the view of the whole" collection, again suggesting not only that Bradstreet had a fairly wide manuscript readership, but also that her fame as a poet preceded her.<sup>63</sup> Jeannine Hensley notes that *The Tenth Muse* was included in a "bookseller London's catalogue" in 1658 that included Shakespeare, Du Bartas, and Milton.<sup>64</sup> Bradstreet had certainly sparked interest from those outside her "private" distribution circle.

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<sup>60</sup> Mather, *Magnalia*, Book II, 233.

<sup>61</sup> Scholars continue to debate whether Bradstreet knew and approved of Woodbridge's intentions for publication. Recently, Stephanie Pietros has pointed out that Bradstreet "assumes responsibility" for *Several Poems*, but not for *The Tenth Muse*. Margaret Thickstun also argues that Bradstreet would have avoided print publication originally because manuscript, not print, was the usual method of distribution among educated, gifted artists. Print publication suggested financial, rather than artistic motivations. See John Woodbridge, "Kind Reader," in *The Tenth Muse*, n.p; Stephanie Pietros, "Anne Bradstreet's 'dear remains': Children and the Creation of Poetic Legacy," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 10, no. 1 (Fall 2015): 51; Thickstun, "Contextualizing Anne Bradstreet's Literary Remains," 395.

<sup>62</sup> See Thickstun, "Contextualizing Anne Bradstreet's Literary Remains," 410-1, 406.

<sup>63</sup> Woodbridge, "Kind Reader," in *The Tenth Muse*, n.p.

<sup>64</sup> Hensley, "Anne Bradstreet's Wreath of Thyme," xxxiii.

The role of manuscript texts, together with a new understanding of the private sphere, have recently reshaped the historiography of Puritan culture. Puritan writers such as Lady Brilliana Harley, Anne Fenwick, Lady Grace Mildmay, and Bradstreet herself treated manuscript collections and letters as written conferences through which to share meditation, devotional compositions, poetry, and narrative. Both women and men in upper-class, highly educated circles, including poets as famous as John Donne, shared their writings almost exclusively in manuscript form.<sup>65</sup> It is difficult for researchers in the twenty-first century to connect introspective religious practice to public authorship. However, the paradox is resolved when Puritanism is viewed as a culture, rather than simply a set of restrictions for personal godliness. As a teenager, Anne Dudley would have analyzed history, politics, and literature and discussed these issues with her father. Later, for a high-ranking, educated woman in a family of political leaders, writing on current issues would have been a natural response to events in her own life and an assessment of the larger world.

To understand Bradstreet as a poet and a woman, this literary, religious context must be seen as the source of her words, thoughts, and actions. For writers like Bradstreet, Puritanism was not simply a set of ambitions. It was a state of mind. Puritanism enabled these people to live in God's sight as judge, but also as friend and guide. Especially in literary analysis, scholars choose far too often to place historical texts in a vacuum. Even historians, who value context,

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<sup>65</sup> Thickstun, "Contextualizing Anne Bradstreet's Literary Remains," 394-5. Thickstun writes that "publishing collections of one's own poems was the province of people who wished to secure patronage or employment. Anne Bradstreet was not looking for work." Bradstreet's position is similar to that of many Puritan female writers who, as either gentry or aristocracy, used authorship and translation to explore ideas, record or respond to events, and reach out to God devotionally. Their manuscript audiences included family members, close friends and, if the author was talented and part of a literary circle, other readers. As we have seen, Puritan theology accommodated manuscript culture because lay study was encouraged and viewed as a communal effort.

can be guilty of isolating evidence. Bradstreet makes numerous references to “conventional” Puritan theology, but on the other hand, she shows marked interest in secular topics such as trees, rivers, and Alexander the Great. Did Bradstreet ultimately conform to the Puritan mindset? Or did secular ideas win the day? The problem with this kind of analysis is that it fails to truly historicize Bradstreet’s work. Religion for her was, as Erica Longfellow describes it, “constitutive and archetypal, a fundamental agent in the construction of literary identities and the shaping of literary texts.”<sup>66</sup> She grappled with her beliefs, certainly, but this was part of the Puritan journey.<sup>67</sup> It did not call her identity into question. If we wish to understand Bradstreet’s texts, we must give her agency to work creatively within the Puritan religious paradigm.

In 1630, eighteen-year-old Anne Dudley Bradstreet stepped onto the *Arbella* and watched her beloved England fade into the distance. It was the last time she would see her native country. Her close attachment to her parents would have been some comfort, and there was also her new husband Simon, with a Cambridge education and interest in politics to match her own.<sup>68</sup> In the coming years, she would adjust to the culture shock of the New England colony and watch others die from illness. She would experience severe bouts of illness herself and employ these experiences to create passionate religious verse. She would continue to study history, science, and politics, and she would write wittily on these issues. She would imitate her favorite authors.

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<sup>66</sup> Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 12.

<sup>67</sup> While Susan Wiseman assumes Bradstreet’s otherness in the Puritan community, she helpfully explains the orthodox role that doubt could play in the spiritual journey of the Calvinist believer. See Wiseman, “Anne Bradstreet’s Poetry and Providence,” 137; see also Robert D. Richardson, Jr., “The Puritan Poetry of Anne Bradstreet,” *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 9, no. 3 (Autumn 1967): 318.

<sup>68</sup> Anne Dudley probably met Simon Bradstreet during his employment by the Earl of Lincoln. On Simon Bradstreet, see Thickstun, “Contextualizing Anne Bradstreet’s Literary Remains,” 390.

She would grieve for childlessness and then birth and raise eight children. And through writing and conversation, she would participate in the godly conferences, strained at times, of the New England churches. Undoubtedly she missed the stability, comfort, and advanced literacy of her Lincolnshire life. But it was among the people of New England—educated, politically minded, often arrogant—that Bradstreet went on to write and circulate her poetry.

Her voice is no less authoritative for its harmony with other Puritan texts, nor must her writings “subvert” Puritan norms in order to merit historical authenticity. Erica Longfellow has aptly noted that “religious discourse was not simply a code for concerns more secular, and to our twenty-first-century minds, more ‘real’. For early modern women and men, God and belief in God were ‘real’, vital elements of daily life.”<sup>69</sup> This deeply religious environment empowered Bradstreet to pursue the literature, history, philosophy, and theology that she loved. And it enabled her to make sense of her world, with its isolation from loved ones, political turmoil, frequent illnesses, and sometimes overwhelming sense of discouragement. All these Bradstreet could balance because her physical experiences served a spiritual purpose. Introducing her bold series of quaternions in *The Tenth Muse*, she describes their vast scope:

Of these consists, our bodyes, cloathes, and food,  
The world, the usefull, hurtfull, and the good:  
Sweet harmony they keep, yet jar oft times,  
Their discord may appear, by these harsh rimes.<sup>70</sup>

With characteristic wit, Bradstreet warns her readers to digest her “harsh rimes” with a grain of salt. She is not, after all, a Sidney or Du Bartas. Nevertheless, “[t]he world, the usefull, hurtfull, and the good” are the theme of Anne Bradstreet’s muse. Through the parallelism of physical and

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<sup>69</sup> Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England*, 12.

<sup>70</sup> Bradstreet, “To her most Honoured Father Thomas Dudley Esq; these humbly presented,” in *The Tenth Muse*, lines 23-6.

spiritual journeys, she creates poetry that expresses skillfully the natural and spiritual world and her place in it.



## Chapter 2

### Bradstreet on Politics and History

Anne Bradstreet's education had prepared her for adult life through rich historical influences that explored humanity's struggle for power, wealth, and safety. Biblical texts, for example, traced Adam and Eve's glorious birth and not-so-glorious fall from grace, as well as the Israelite people's search for a promised land and their struggle to maintain their culture. Although the Massachusetts Bay colonists had escaped the drama of English politics, they now faced a new set of challenges. In 1636-7, the Antinomian Controversy swept through Massachusetts Bay, the culmination of intense theological and political tension. Bradstreet's father, Thomas Dudley, played a forceful part in the controversy as lieutenant governor when he condemned Ann Hutchinson for heresy in words that thinly disguised his fear of political collapse.<sup>1</sup>

While the transcript of Hutchinson's trial suggests that Bradstreet and her husband did not advocate Dudley's harsh measures, Bradstreet later expressed deep alarm over the unrest of "sectaries" in the colony. Watching fellow Puritans turn away from orthodoxy, she began to doubt whether the godly truly existed.<sup>2</sup> What had happened to the conferences in Lincolnshire and Boston, to the religious stability in which Bradstreet had thrived during her studies? New England seemed to have replaced them with tense theological debate, communal scrutiny, and

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<sup>1</sup> "Appendix Number II. November 1637. The Examination of Mrs. Ann Hutchinson at the Court at Newtown.," in *The History of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay, from the Charter of King William and Queen Mary, in 1691, Until the Year 1750.*, by Thomas Hutchinson, vol. 1 (Boston, NE: Thomas & John Fleet, 1767), 488.

<sup>2</sup> Bradstreet, "To my dear children," in *Meditations Divine and Morall: Manuscript, 1664-1672?*, ed. and trans. Simon Bradstreet, 1664, MS Am 1007.1, Stevens Memorial Library Deposit, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, seq. 51.

political bullying. Bradstreet had struggled already to accept New England and had become a member of the church only when “convinced it was y<sup>e</sup> way of God...”<sup>3</sup> Childlessness for several years would have exacerbated the loneliness of culture shock.<sup>4</sup> Then followed an explosive religious conflict that turned nastily political.

Bradstreet’s sensitivity to these struggles would increase her burden to historicize them, to trace God’s guiding hand. Only a few years after Hutchinson’s banishment, she watched the revolution unfold across the Atlantic in the bloody 1640s. As conflict escalated in England, colonists worried for family and friends they had left behind. After a series of battles between a predominantly Puritan Parliament and Charles I, the Parliament took matters into its own hands. Bradstreet would have followed these developments closely through correspondence from the Puritan community in Lincolnshire, as well as from the reports of New Englanders who traveled back to England on business or to participate in the rebellion. Her versification of 2 Samuel 1 in “Davids Lamentation for Saul, and Jonathan, 2 Sam. 1. 19” demonstrates an engagement with the themes of patriotism, friendship, and war that destroyed the “mighty falne into decay.”<sup>5</sup> The heroism of Saul and Jonathan could not save them from a cruel and violent death. Many of Bradstreet’s poems meditate on the transiency of life. Speaking as Childhood in “Of the Four

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., seq. 47.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., seq. 48.

<sup>5</sup> Bradstreet, “Davids Lamentation for Saul, and Jonathan, 2 Sam. 1. 19,” in *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America or Severall Poems, Compiled with Great Variety of Wit and Learning, Full of Delight*. (London: Printed for Stephen Bowtell at the Sign of the Bible in Popes Head-Alley, 1650), line 39. Scholars such as Charlotte Gordon believe that Bradstreet versifies the text as a “veiled” mourning for Charles I. While necessary a theory of inference, the interpretation is consistent with Bradstreet’s moderate political position in *The Tenth Muse*, which supports legislative reform, but respects monarchial authority. See Charlotte Gordon, “A Different, More Complicated Bradstreet: Interview With Charlotte Gordon,” interview by Elizabeth Ferszt and Ivy Schweitzer, *Women's Studies* 43. No. 3, April 2014, 377.

Ages of Man,” she comments that mankind is “[f]rom birth stayned, with Adams sinfull fact.”<sup>6</sup>  
This world’s pleasures quickly give way to war and corruption.

John Cotton’s ministry would have assured Bradstreet during her childhood that these challenges prepared believers for an incorruptible inheritance in Heaven.<sup>7</sup> In the presence of Christ, Puritans believed that they would exchange uncertainty and persecution for “endless bliss” that would far outshine earthly joys.<sup>8</sup> Because of this, writers like Bradstreet urged themselves and their audiences to avoid relying on earthly pleasures and embrace their future with God. Sinners might find happiness in this life for a time like a sailor who travels carefree,

As if he had command of wind and tide,  
And now become great Master of the seas;  
But suddenly a storm spoiles all the sport.<sup>9</sup>

In the same way, Bradstreet says, “he that saileth in this world of pleasure” deludes himself.<sup>10</sup>  
Those who seek happiness in friendship, fame, or wealth will find that these pleasures pass away leaving dissatisfaction and emptiness.

At first glance, the stark contrast for Puritan authors between earthly and heavenly pleasure can seem inconsistent with their interest in practical theology and politics. After all,

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<sup>6</sup> Bradstreet, “The Four Ages of Man,” in *The Tenth Muse*, line 2.59.

<sup>7</sup> Cotton is recorded as saying that “...how ever God deals with us in outward things, yet his *Covenant* is a certain ground for our eternall inheritance; although a mans house may be turned upside down, yet not withstanding here is our comfort, we have our eternall happinesse in the highest heavens, *Luke* 12. 32.” See John Cotton, “The Saints Comforts against Personall and Domesticall Infirmities, &c.,” in *The Covenant of Gods Free Grace, Most Sweetly Unfolded, and Comfortably Applied to a Disquieted Soul, from That Text of 2. Sam. 23. Ver. 5. Also a Doctrinall Conclusion, That There Is in All Such Who Are Effectually Called, In-dwelling Spiritual Gifts and Graces, Wrought and Created in Them by the Holy Ghost*, by John Cotton and John Davenport (London: Printed for Matthew Simmons, 1645), 23.

<sup>8</sup> Bradstreet, “In memory of my dear grand child Anne Bradstreet. Who deceased June 20. 1669 being three years and seven Months old,” in *Several Poems Compiled with great variety of Wit and Learning, Full of Delight*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Printed by John Foster, 1678), line 18.

<sup>9</sup> Bradstreet, “Contemplations,” in *Several Poems*, lines 31.3-5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 32.1, 4.

Bradstreet's poems, especially those in *The Tenth Muse*, enthusiastically celebrate worldly success in politics and art. "In honour of that High and Mighty Princess, Queen Elizabeth, of most happy memory" more than fulfills its title as Bradstreet catalogues at length Elizabeth's virtues, proclaiming:

Although great Queen, thou now in silence lye,  
Yet thy loud Herauld Fame, doth to the sky  
Thy wondrous worth proclaime, in every clime...<sup>11</sup>

Rather than dismissing Elizabeth's earthly successes, Bradstreet dwells on them exultantly, and attributes England's prosperity and happiness to her judicious reign. Elizabeth's godliness preserves her legacy after her death.

Bradstreet analyzes earlier historical figures in "The Foure Monarchies," by far the longest work in the collection. Divided into four parts relating the histories of Assyria, Persia, Greece, and Rome, this poem confirms Bradstreet's familiarity with classical authors.<sup>12</sup> In painstaking detail Bradstreet records the rise and fall of each kingdom through a succession of rulers who led wars, forged alliances, and traded in territories. The rhyming couplets of course grow monotonous. Bradstreet seems to list historical events in a sort of versified timeline.

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<sup>11</sup> Bradstreet, "In honour of that High and Mighty Princess, Queen Elizabeth, of most happy memory," in *The Tenth Muse*, lines 1.1-3.

<sup>12</sup> Although "The Foure Monarchies" is a single poem in four parts, each part is cited separately here due to length. The last of these four, "The Roman Monarchy, being the Fourth, and last, beginning, anon Mundi, 3213," remains unfinished. In the final lines of "The Third Monarchy," Bradstreet expresses her intention to leave Rome to "a better pen" (2.789), but this is followed by a brief note in verse saying that her "restlesse heart" urged her to complete the work. "The Roman Monarchy" follows—in *The Tenth Muse*, it is seven brief stanzas. An eighth stanza, added in *Several Poems* and titled "An Apology," explains that Bradstreet's notes for completion were destroyed in the fire of 1666. See Bradstreet, "The third Monarchy was the Grecian, beginning under Alexander the Great, in the 112 Olimpiad," in *The Tenth Muse*, line 2.789, stanza 3; Bradstreet, "The Roman Monarchy, being the Fourth, and last, beginning, Anno Mundi, 3213," stanza 7; Bradstreet, "An Apology," in *Several Poems*, lines 9-14. For a full explanation of the manuscript and print development of "The Four Monarchies," see Thickstun, "Contextualizing Anne Bradstreet's Literary Remains," 409-10.

Literary critics have also noted Bradstreet's imitation of Raleigh here; Jane Eberwein goes so far as to accuse Bradstreet of "disappearing" into her own writing in her efforts to prioritize sources like Raleigh and avoid voicing her own opinion.<sup>13</sup> However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the vocal acts of poetic creation and manuscript circulation defend Bradstreet from accusations of self-silencing.

While Bradstreet's heavy reliance on Raleigh for content and interpretation in "The Four Monarchies" may be disappointing from a literary perspective, it hardly diminishes the poem's historical value. Drawing on intensive study of Elizabethan Puritan literature, Bradstreet uses "The Four Monarchies" to engage with and comment on historical events. Erica Longfellow has discussed seventeenth-century English culture's empowerment of middle-and-upper-class women. Even when they advocated unusual ideas without retreating into a masculine voice, personal godliness and real intellectual talent could earn them the ear of their contemporaries on political and gender issues.<sup>14</sup> Bradstreet does exactly that within the paradigm of Puritan theology. She takes time to highlight female characters such as the brilliant, murderous Semiramis who,

...like a brave Virago, play'd the rex,  
And was both shame and glory of her sex,<sup>15</sup>

and Cleopatra, heroically committing suicide to avoid humiliation.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Eberwein, "Civil War and Bradstreet's 'Monarchies'," *Early American Literature* 26, no. 2 (January 1, 1991): 121.

<sup>14</sup> Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 211.

<sup>15</sup> Bradstreet, "The Four Monarchies, the Assyrian being the first, beginning under Nimrod, 131. yeares after the Floud," in *The Tenth Muse*, lines 4.3-4.

<sup>16</sup> Bradstreet, "The third Monarchy," in *The Tenth Muse*, lines 2.753-4.

Also of special interest to Bradstreet is the queen of Persia, Darius' wife, whose story she takes time to share despite its insignificance to the narrative. In Alexander's expedition against Persia, the queen is taken captive with her ladies who, to Bradstreet's evident satisfaction, receive honorable treatment "though their beauties were unparalleled."<sup>17</sup> Later on, Bradstreet relates the queen's death in prison,

Who had long travaile, and much sorrow seen,  
Now bids the world adieu, her time being spent...<sup>18</sup>

Through the death of the beloved queen, Bradstreet briefly unites Darius and Alexander in expressions of their grief. Bradstreet's empathy with the queen is unsurprising given her personal experience of political conflict. By 1642, her father had served several times as New England's governor, and her husband was deeply involved Massachusetts politics. As Simon Bradstreet's partner, Anne Bradstreet was not only a respected gentlewoman and poet, but also represented colonial leadership. She knew firsthand how power-struggles within ecclesiastical and civil government could entangle the best-intentioned. Women, as well as men, risked everything in such conflicts.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the story of the Persian queen serves a dual purpose: it creates a bond between the two warring monarchs, but it also adds color to "the long coil of war," revealing the suffering that results from mankind's scramble for personal gain.<sup>20</sup>

It would be a mistake to categorize Bradstreet's viewpoint as "feminist" here. Her writings demonstrate a strong commitment to Puritan religion and culture, and she associates herself with classical, biblical, and Elizabethan authorship. However, her perspective on gender

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., line 1.168.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., lines 1.303-4.

<sup>19</sup> Eberwein, "Civil War and Bradstreet's 'Monarchies'," 124.

<sup>20</sup> Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. Robert Fagles, deluxe ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 85.

issues is arguably more significant for this reason: she is a confident woman writer energized by her Puritan culture that stands in stark contrast to twenty-first century categories. Puritanism, from Bradstreet's perspective, provides a perfectly legitimate context for her story. Like Lucy Hutchinson,<sup>21</sup> she apologizes in "The Prologue" of *The Tenth Muse* for writing on topics better suited to men's superior minds:

Preheminence in each, and all is yours;  
Yet grant some small acknowledgement of ours.<sup>22</sup>

Placed in the poem's broader context, however, these lines can reasonably be understood to address the "carping tongue" whose misogyny Bradstreet anticipates in stanza 5.<sup>23</sup> Judging from the enthusiastic—if at times tactless—profusion of commendatory poems introducing *The Tenth Muse*, many male readers were more than happy to recognize Bradstreet's merits. Bradstreet frequently confesses her lack of skill, but this suggests primarily an awareness of literary, rather than gendered, inferiority to her beloved Du Bartas and Sidney. After all, the apology of "The

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<sup>21</sup> On similar apologetic language in Lucy Hutchinson's translation of Lucretius, Erica Longfellow writes, "Our 'more becoming virtue is silence', or so some might say. One wonders, rather, if Lucy Hutchinson believes it, given that the assertion is embedded in a lengthy, outspoken preface to a six-book translation. What is apparent is that Lucy Hutchinson recognises that, in the eyes of at least some of the world, women are not accorded honour for their writing. Such an acknowledgement is prudent: we might cast our minds back to the scene in the Life in which John Hutchinson, enamoured of Lucy Apsley's ability to read Latin and write verse, is warned by jealous women that she is too dull and scholarly to merit his attention. For some, not always men, the notion that a woman could write was not to her public credit. Keenly aware of this strand of opinion, Lucy Hutchinson in the Lucretius dedication leaves open the possibility that her muse, at least, is not aspiring. But even this potential modesty is mitigated by the fact that she is seeking patronage by writing the dedication at all." Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England*, 205. See also Susan Wiseman's helpful analysis of apologetic language in Bradstreet's *The Tenth Muse*. Wiseman argues that the language certainly reveals the constraints Bradstreet faced as a woman writer, but that these constraints did not hinder her overt political themes in "The Four Monarchies" and "A Dialogue." Wiseman, "5 Poetry and Politics: Anne Bradstreet and Lucy Hutchinson," in *Conspiracy and Virtue: Women, Writing, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2010), 188.

<sup>22</sup> Bradstreet, "The Prologue," in *The Tenth Muse*, 7.5-6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.1-2.

Prologue” for Bradstreet’s inability “[t]o sing of Wars, of Captaines, and of Kings,” precedes a lengthy series of poems on those very topics.<sup>24</sup> This does not imply that Bradstreet or her Puritan contemporaries were unaffected by misogyny in seventeenth-century European communities. However, if Bradstreet’s statements are placed in context, they reveal an awareness of impending sexist criticism voiced by some, not all in Puritan society.

With this awareness, Bradstreet examines the outworking of Puritanism as a set of values with powerful, real-world results. Monarchs determine their nations’ fates through their own virtue, bravery, and wisdom. Bradstreet is ready to acknowledge the heroic deeds of the very worst and most bloodthirsty, but she is also quick to call out injustice, even in those she personally admires. Alexander the Great, the exploits of whose “large vast minde” she retells at length, is censured for the murder of his relatives, “done, against all right, and natures laws,” and Bradstreet notes that,

As Alexander in his greatnesse growes,  
So dai’y of his vertues doth he lose:<sup>25</sup>

To this arrogance, to “fained Deity, and foulisn pride,” Bradstreet attributes not only Alexander’s untimely death, but the successive downfalls of each empire as rulers blessed with wealth and power fall prey to their own desperate greed and vice.<sup>26</sup> This expectation of justice informs Bradstreet’s perspective on politics. Her respect for the English crown is evident in her elegy “In honour of that High and Mighty Princess, Queen Elizabeth, of most happy memory.” Bradstreet exudes patriotism as she lists Elizabeth’s triumphs over Spain, France, and Ireland.<sup>27</sup> She paints a

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 1.1.

<sup>25</sup> Bradstreet, “The third Monarchy,” in *The Tenth Muse*, lines 1.16, 1.33, 1.542-3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., line 1.562.

<sup>27</sup> Bradstreet, “In honour of that High and Mighty Princess,” in *The Tenth Muse*, 2.11-18, 26-38.



hopeful picture of Charles I's return, reformed and virtuous, to lead England's moral and political supremacy.<sup>28</sup>

Charles I and Alexander are both brought down, however, by this ideal's opposite: immorality. For Bradstreet, violence and injustice are incompatible with either Christianity or English patriotism. One scholar has argued that Bradstreet ignores the historical application of Christian principles; such a position, however, fails to recognize that extended religious discourse would be superfluous to Bradstreet's purpose.<sup>29</sup> Providence directs the narrative. Bradstreet interprets it. She harmonizes the convoluted power struggles of several thousand years into a simple—often painfully repetitive—pattern on which she comments from both a historical and theological vantage-point.

Thus Kings, and Kingdoms, have their times, and dates...  
Now up, now down, now chief, and then brought under,  
The Heavens thus rule, to fill the earth with wonder.<sup>30</sup>

In the past, "The Four Monarchies" has sometimes been interpreted as symbolic of Bradstreet's interest in "worldly things," her struggle to peel her eyes away from the tantalizing possibilities of this life. Robert D. Richardson Jr. has gone so far as to say that these and other poems of *The Tenth Muse* "show a nearly unqualified worldliness.... There is no emphasis on Adam's fall, no attempt to make her subject subserve Calvinism, very little Christianity of any sort."<sup>31</sup>

However, a closer look reveals that Bradstreet's historical narrative confirms, rather than contradicts, her belief that there is no ultimate "consolation" in "brittle earth."<sup>32</sup> Monarchs gain

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<sup>28</sup> Bradstreet, "A Dialogue between Old England and New, concerning their present troubles. Anno 1642," in *The Tenth Muse*, 7.41-8.

<sup>29</sup> Richardson, Jr., "The Puritan Poetry of Anne Bradstreet," *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* 9, no. 3 (Autumn 1967): 320.

<sup>30</sup> Bradstreet, "The third Monarchy," lines 2.757, 759-60.

<sup>31</sup> Richardson, Jr., "The Puritan Poetry of Anne Bradstreet," 319.

<sup>32</sup> Bradstreet, "Of the vanity of all worldly creatures," in *The Tenth Muse*, line 1.4.

power through brutality or heroism—most often through both—and establish their empires. She celebrates the twists and turns, the “sensorial and instantaneous, what comes only in order to pass.”<sup>33</sup> But she is able simultaneously to grasp the purpose of these moments. God is continually at work, not just reigning over history as a whole, but in the actions of grasping Darius, arrogant Alexander, and the clamoring aristocrats. Further, the end of “The Third Monarchy” ties all four kingdoms together as the fulfilment of biblical prophecy. Referencing the Book of Daniel, Bradstreet declares that the Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman monarchies—the Lion, Bear, Leopard, and Ram—will “[a]ll trembling stand, before that powerfull Lambe.”<sup>34</sup> This distinctly Puritan statement places not just the souls of individuals, but the kingdoms of the earth, under the spiritual *and* physical reign of a returning Christ. The final chapter of mankind’s story is yet to come.

Distinctive here is the impact of Bradstreet’s Puritan eschatology. Francis Bremer notes that Puritans often expected England to fulfil Old Testament prophecies as the fifth, final kingdom, legislating justice and godliness across the earth.<sup>35</sup> For radical Puritans such as Bradstreet, this fifth monarchy was one in which Christians would take the lead, one which they might see in their lifetime.<sup>36</sup> While this idea sprang from biblical prophecy, it was also grounded

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<sup>33</sup> Arsić, "Brain-ache: Anne Bradstreet on Sensing," *ELH* 80, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 1040.

<sup>34</sup> Bradstreet, "The third Monarchy," line 1.784. On the political implications of this poem, see Wiseman, Wiseman, "5 Poetry and Politics," 188-90.

<sup>35</sup> Bremer, *Puritanism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 69.

<sup>36</sup> For the purposes of this essay, the term “radical” is used as employed by Collinson, Tyacke, and Bremer to refer to strains of Puritanism, whether Congregationalist or Presbyterian, that actively sought reform in the English church, especially through politics. It is important to preserve the distinction between “radicals” and “moderates.” Moderate Puritanism was prevalent in the Church of England as a whole during the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries; civil conflict, however, distinguished these moderates from the more radical Puritans who were, in many cases, willing to risk emigration or revolution for reform’s sake. As such, “radical” Puritanism in this essay does not include other non-conformist sects such as the antinomians,

in the creative workings of God's sovereignty. Divine justice promised that righteousness would triumph over evil, and God steered history inexorably toward that conclusion.

Calvinist theology provided a historiographical lens through which Puritan writers approached political conflict. Lady Brilliana Harley, a powerful social advocate for Puritan policy, wrote to her son Edward as she faced siege from royalists in 1642:

It is the Lords cause that we have stood for... And for our comforts, I thinke never any laide plots to route out all Gods childeren at once, but that the Lord did sheawe Himselfe might in saveing His sarvants and confounding His enimy, as He did Pharowe, when he thought to have destroyd all Israell, and so Haman.<sup>37</sup>

Harley's analysis traces God's protection from ancient times, making the Puritan cause one of many battles against evil throughout history, as important as Israel's deliverance from Pharaoh's enslavement or Haman's attempted genocide. The Puritan cause was a heavenly one, a war against physical evil created by spiritual sin that would ultimately end in the triumphant reign of Christ and His people.<sup>38</sup> Nor would this be a purely spiritual reign. While eschatological

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Separatist reformers, Quakers, or Anabaptists, most of whom would have been considered outsiders by radical Puritan communities. On Puritanism within the Church of England and the separation of moderate and radical strains, see Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 56-86. On radical Puritan theology and culture, see Bremer, "Chapter 1: The Experience and Meaning of God's Caress," in *Lay Empowerment and the Development of Puritanism* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire (GB): Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 5-10. Edmund Morgan explores relationships between radical Puritan and Separatist communities in New England. Interestingly, he argues that early Puritan churches in Massachusetts Bay took on some Separatist characteristics, due in part to geographical separation from the Church of England. See Morgan, "The New England System," in *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), 64-112.

<sup>37</sup> "CLXXVII. For my deare sonne Mr. Edward Harley," letter from Brilliana Harley to Edward Harley, July 19, 1642, in *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley, Wife of Sir Robert Harley, of Brampton Bryan, Knight of the Bath*, ed. Thomas Taylor Lewis (London: Printed for the Camden Society, 1854), 180-1.

<sup>38</sup> Harley's letters provide fascinating insight on Puritan aristocratic women's involvement in politics. Not only does Harley discuss political strategies and events with her husband in Parliament and her son at Oxford; she also represents the Puritan cause locally, shepherding the Harley tenants, lands, and fortune. Caroline Bowden writes that "she had managed the estate with the aid of a steward and become knowledgeable about farming practice,

interpretations differed widely within Puritanism, many radical Puritans believed that Christ's physical kingdom, the culmination of history, could be built in their lifetime.

Authors and speakers applied this to their theological, meditative, political, and poetic writings in a variety of ways. For example, in his preface to a posthumous edition of John Cotton's *An Abstract of Laws and Government*, William Aspinall wrote that Gentile nations, including England, now sinfully resisted the civil "government of Christ," but could look forward to a new era of prosperity and peace under Christ's reign, a time when the godly nations could enjoy a wealth of financial and military resources.<sup>39</sup> Aspinall grounds this idealism in the theology of earthly suffering in the face of evil: "But the season is not yet full come for these things, and there yet remains some of the sufferings of Christ to be fulfilled in the Saints, and judgements upon his and their Enemies."<sup>40</sup> This political agenda was a widespread, loudly voiced phenomenon hardly original to Aspinall. Calvinist theology and millennial eschatology appear frequently as the foundation for Puritan political leaders who worked tirelessly, in the words of Edmund Morgan, "to gain control of the existing government and through the government to reform the church."<sup>41</sup> What is notable here is that Aspinall writes from a host of Puritan voices, women and men, who have interpreted present struggles as both a reminder of earth's transiency and a forerunner of heavenly triumph.

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taking many decisions on her own. With the coming of war, she had, in addition, to arrange the defence of the household and cope with the problems caused by being surrounded by hostile neighbours and, finally, the enemy army." See Bowden, "Women as Intermediaries: An Example of the Use of Literacy in the Late Sixteenth and Early Seventeenth Centuries," *History of Education* 22, no. 3 (September 1, 1993): 216.

<sup>39</sup> William Aspinall, "To the Reader" in John Cotton, *An Abstract of Laws and Government*. (London: William Aspinwall, printed by M.S. for Livewel Chapman, 1655), n.p.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., n.p.

<sup>41</sup> Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea*, 16.

Bradstreet's "A Dialogue between Old England and New, concerning their present troubles" communicates this message through conversation between characters, a practice common to other Puritan writers such as Elizabeth Major and Lady Mary Carey.<sup>42</sup> Written in 1642, about a decade after her arrival in New England, this poem illustrates the potential of "the vanity of all worldly creatures" to serve as creative inspiration as well as a political platform. New England begs her mother, Old England, once "[w]ith honour, wealth, and peace, happy and blest,"<sup>43</sup> to reveal the cause of her distress.<sup>44</sup> In response, Old England lists a host of sins including blasphemy and immorality; worst of all, however, is her "scorning of the Saints of the Most High" whom she has slandered and persecuted.<sup>45</sup> Bradstreet does not sidestep the issue of emigration here; Old England confesses to New England her past injustice:

... thou, poor soule, wast jeer'd among the rest,  
Thy flying for the Truth I made a jeast;<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Carey wrote the manuscript "A Dialogue betwixt the Soul, and the Body" about a year before *The Tenth Muse* was published in print. "Body" expresses grief at the death of her infant son, one of five of Carey's children who died soon after birth. In response, her soul does not dismiss her grief, but instead encourages her with the knowledge that Christ has overcome death and conquered it. "Body" and "Soul" work together to find comfort. While Elizabeth Major, intending a broader readership, is more didactic, she too employs the dialogue structure extensively in *Honey on the Rod*. "Consolation" points a fearful "Soul" to Christ's promises of forgiveness. See Mary Carey, "February, 11th 1649. A Dialogue Betwixt the Soul, and the Body.," in "Meditations and Poetry (1647-57)," in *Flesh and Spirit: An Anthology of Seventeenth-century Women's Writing*, ed. Rachel Adcock, Sara Read, and Anna Ziomek (Manchester University Press, 2016), 45-51; Elizabeth Major, *Honey on the Rod: Or a Comfortable Contemplation for One in Affliction; with Sundry Poems on Several Subjects* (London: Printed by Tho: Maxey, 1656), 1-160.

<sup>43</sup> Robert Hilliker has pointed out the "use of domestic tropes to address political purposes" common to Bradstreet's poetry as a whole. She illuminates theoretical issues through their application to personal reality. See Robert Hilliker, "Engendering Identity: The Discourse of Familial Education in Anne Bradstreet and Marie De L'Incarnation," *Early American Literature* 42, no. 3 (November 2007): 438; Bradstreet, "A Dialogue between Old England and New, concerning their present troubles," in *The Tenth Muse*, line 1.2.

<sup>44</sup> Bradstreet, "A Dialogue," lines 1.5-6.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., lines 4.43-52, 4.65-8.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., lines 4.47-8.

Interestingly, Bradstreet plays the historian throughout this poem as well. New England compares Old England's present distress to the past exploits of English monarchs in her attempts to provide relief, and Old England links her struggles to the political chaos caused by religious strife in Germany, Ireland, and Rochelle.<sup>47</sup> All three examples demonstrate the power of religious division and cruelty to destroy a nation, a threat that had concerned Puritans for decades. Thomas Brightman's printed commentary on Revelation, published before Bradstreet's birth, compared the Church of England to the accursed church at Laodicea and anticipated retribution for its support of civil tyranny.<sup>48</sup> This particular interpretation was extreme, but Michael Winship notes that Brightman's ideas were widely embraced by many Puritan leaders, the "[p]roto-congregationalists, who would become icons to the ministers of Massachusetts."<sup>49</sup> The violence of the revolution was not unexpected.

As in "The Foure Monarchies," Bradstreet employs exhaustive detail to paint a picture of chaos and bloodshed. This time, however, she is telling a personal history. Growing up in Lincolnshire, she had enjoyed the safety of a strong Puritan community under the auspices of her father's employer. In the congregation at Boston, she had studied under John Cotton's ministry. Now, however, this devout, educated culture was threatened by civil war. Bradstreet compares the revolution to the martyrs' suffering at Rochelle and the bloody civil strife across Europe. It is, she declares, a battle between good and evil:

My better part in Court of Parliament,  
To ease my groaning land shew their intent,  
To crush the proud, and right to each man deal.  
To help the Church, and stay the Common-Weal.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., lines 4.79-91.

<sup>48</sup> Winship, *Godly Republicanism : Puritans, Pilgrims, and a City on a Hill* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), 64.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 64-5.

<sup>50</sup> Bradstreet, "A Dialogue," lines 6.5-8.

Bradstreet clarifies her position on Parliamentary interference in the church when she declares that removing anti-Puritan bishops “must be done by Gospel, not by law.”<sup>51</sup> Despite her desire for reform in church and Parliament, she recognizes that church authorities must be respected in order to preserve the national unity.

For Bradstreet, it must have been disheartening to see her hopes of a godly restoration crushed with Charles I’s beheading. It has often been asserted that Calvinist theological influences were grimly enforced in the matter of civil authority, as seen in the strict social order of the city of Geneva, which influenced New England’s demand for spiritual homogeneity.<sup>52</sup> But the political diversity of the English Puritan movement, with which Bradstreet and the Massachusetts Bay colonists associated themselves early on, suggests otherwise. While leaders of the revolution might put on a front of rigid piety in response to royalist excesses, the Puritan movement as a whole continued to explore possibilities for godly living. A year after Charles I lost his head, John Woodbridge seems to have had no scruples publishing a poem hoping for the king’s conversion to Puritanism by a poet who was already much admired and who became even more widely read as a result. Calvinist theology did not, it appears, preclude the possibility of religious or political variety, even among women writers. But by the time *The Tenth Muse* was

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., line 6.20.

<sup>52</sup> See, for example, Matthew J. Tuininga’s sweeping assertion that “Calvin emphasised [sic] that subjects in all manner of relationships owe largely unquestioning obedience to their superiors, even when those superiors are unjust, impious or tyrannical.” “‘Because of Your Hardness of Heart’: Calvin and the Limits of Law,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 69, no. 3 (August 2016): 281. See also Darren Walhof, “Beyond Disentanglement: The Politics of Reconstructing Religion and Superstition in Calvin’s Geneva,” *Il Pensiero Politico* 43, no. 3 (2010): 321; Timothy H. Breen and Stephen Foster, “The Puritans’ Greatest Achievement: A Study of Social Cohesion in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts,” *The Journal of American History* 60, no. 1 (June 1973): 5-22.

published in 1650, hope for a godly fifth monarchy had to come from another source than the dead king.

Across the Atlantic, Puritan writers like Lady Brilliana Harley were less sympathetic to Royalists perceived as an immediate, physical threat. Harley sent to her husband anti-Puritan sermons by the local minister, Dr. Rogers, whom she believed ought to be silenced.<sup>53</sup> In 1643, only a year after Bradstreet finished “A Dialogue,” Harley died from illness after leading resistance to a siege at the family castle of Brompton.<sup>54</sup> The contrast is striking between Harley’s personal records of projected defenses, local anti-Puritan violence, and concern for her family’s safety, and Bradstreet’s sweeping commentary on revolutionary politics. “A Dialogue” is written from the vantage point of an author safely removed from the revolution’s immediate conflict and yet fearing its consequences for her beloved mother country.

While Puritan authors differed in their solutions to political issues, they were united on the cause of these troubles. Puritans did not expect true unity either in church or government while they daily combatted the hatred of Christ’s enemies. In a letter only a few months before her death, Harley wrote, “...deare Ned, I hope you and myself will remember for whous caus your father and we are hated. It is for the caus of our God, and I hope we shall be so fare from being ashamed of it or trubelled, that we beare the reproche of it, that we shall binde it as a crowne upon us...”<sup>55</sup> Whether through Parliamentary control, emigration, or compromise with the king, Puritan writers fought for God’s glory as heavenly heirs against the world. Disgrace

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<sup>53</sup> "CLXIX. For my deare sonne Mr. Edward Harley," letter from Brilliana Harley to Edward Harley, June 27, 1642, in *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, 174.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Taylor Lewis, "Introduction," in Brilliana Harley, *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, xix-xx.

<sup>55</sup> "CLXXVI. To her son Edward," letter from Brilliana Harley to Edward Harley, July 17, 1642, in *Letters of the Lady Brilliana Harley*, 179.



and “reproche” were to be expected of depraved humanity, but Christ’s return would reward them with peace.

Different authors served different purposes in this spiritual and physical battle. For example, Elizabethan Puritan Lady Grace Mildmay, in her autobiography, writes a glowing description of her father-in-law, Sir Walter Mildmay, that demonstrates the inspirational function of personal testimony among Puritans urging each other towards heaven. Mildmay writes that Sir Walter, offered many opportunities to participate in corruption, avoided them because he knew that God hated such injustice.<sup>56</sup> Examples like these could inspire the author’s circle of readers and warn them away from worldly desires. Written testimony could also reassure writers and readers of God’s faithfulness in trying times, as Lady Mary Carey did in a letter to her husband: “My Dear, God hath always put us in safe Places in these Times of War, and given us Plenty in these Times of Wants...”<sup>57</sup> Confident in God’s protection, Puritans reformed church and state with his aid and for his glory. Recalling his past intervention on their behalf allowed them to face challenges with hope.

Sermons, of course, were a constant source of motivation because they reminded the godly community of their goal. In his famous lay sermon “A Modell of Christian Charity,” John Winthrop spoke to the gathered emigrants on the edge of an unknown land. Winthrop’s sermon urges his listeners to sacrifice temporal comforts to serve each other in a time of instability and

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<sup>56</sup> Lady Grace Mildmay and Randall Martin, "The Autobiography of Grace, Lady Mildmay," *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance Et Réforme*, New Series / Nouvelle Série, 18, no. 1 (Winter / Hiver 1994): 51, 33.

<sup>57</sup> Mary Carey, "To my most loving, and dearly beloved Husband, George Payler, Esq.," in "Meditations and Poetry (1647-57)," in *Flesh and Spirit: An Anthology of Seventeenth-century Women's Writing*, ed. Rachel Adcock, Sara Read, and Anna Ziomek (Manchester University Press, 2016), 44.

danger. Like Bradstreet, he paints a historical backdrop for present challenges, referencing the selflessness of “our Forefathers in times of persecution in England” alongside biblical heroes such as Nehemiah and Dorcas.<sup>58</sup> Aware that some will complain of inconvenience or financial risk, Winthrop confronts those who cling to earthly commodities: “And I would know of those whoe pleade soe much for laying up for time to come, whether they holde that to be Gospell, Math. 16. 19. *Lay not upp for yourselves Treasures upon Earth &c.*”<sup>59</sup> Like Elizabeth Jocelin, a Puritan gentlewoman who had written of spiritual wisdom to her unborn child that it might obtain “a spirituall portion,” Winthrop is not dismissing the importance of earthly necessities.<sup>60</sup> Instead, he argues that Christ warns against earthly treasures because they will physically decay—“they are subject to the moathe, the rust, the theife—” and “steale away the hearte” from the lasting treasure of heaven.<sup>61</sup> Worldly things are not to be rejected because of their physical nature, but because of their fallen, sin-damaged state—they are temporary distractions from the greater joy of another world that will not only be tangible, but eternal.

When we understand “the vanity of all worldly creatures” within the paradigm of this world vs. the next, rather than physical vs. spiritual, the Puritan rationale for political writing suddenly becomes clear. Theology explains mankind’s history—a series of brilliant successes by powerful leaders followed by the inevitable downfall as God dismantles the plans of the despot. Theology also enables Puritans to seek happiness through present action that anticipates Christ’s return. In his essay, “Women, Prophecy, and Authority in Early Stuart Puritanism,” David Como

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<sup>58</sup> Winthrop, “A Model of Christian Charity,” 1630, TS 3rd Series 7:31-48, Hanover Historical Texts Collection, Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 38.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>60</sup> Elizabeth Jocelin, *The Mothers Legacie, to Her Unborne Childe* (London: Printed by John Hauiland, for William Barret, 1624), 9.

<sup>61</sup> Winthrop, “A Modell of Christian Charity,” 36.

illustrates the importance of literature—especially in manuscript form—as spiritual action for authors like practical theologian Anne Fenwick. Like most Puritan theologians, Fenwick would have distributed manuscript copies of her writing to the communities before an admiring printer published them for profit.<sup>62</sup>

In the second edition of her collection of biblical promises or “legacies” for struggling Christians, Fenwick advises her readers that, “Because the time draweth neere of the fall of Antichrist, wee must stirre up our selves to hasten the Lord by earnest prayers...”<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, Fenwick’s first publisher, Robert Swayne, omitted this and five other promises from his edition of *The Saints Legacies*, evidently without her permission. Como has suggested that this was due to their “radical” content—Fenwick’s choice to draw a direct connection between Christ’s return and the Puritan cause.<sup>64</sup> The Puritan claim to the kingdom of heaven was certainly a divisive and challenging one, and war was a brutal price to pay. God did not strew with roses the path to a safe and joyful future. And yet, as Bremer writes, civil turmoil “offered the hope of a new dawn,” a direct experience of Christ’s kingdom that inspired the daily lives of Puritan people.<sup>65</sup>

Women writers like Harley, Bradstreet, and Fenwick did not hesitate to predict that Christ’s return would not only bring peace on earth, but preeminence to England specifically. In the final stanzas of “A Dialogue,” Bradstreet pictures England’s triumph under a godly King Charles who, with his nobles,

Out of all mists, such glorious dayes will bring,

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<sup>62</sup> David R. Como, "Women, Prophecy, and Authority in Early Stuart Puritanism," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 61, no. 2 (January 2000): 210.

<sup>63</sup> Anne Fenwick, "The Saints Legacies: Or, A Collection of Certain Promises out of the Word of God (1631)," in *Anne Phoenix*, ed. David Como, Betty S. Travitsky, and Anne Lake Prescott, vol. 5, *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works*, Series I: Printed Writings, 1500-1640: Part 4 (Routledge, 2006), 196-7.

<sup>64</sup> Como, "Women, Prophecy, and Authority in Early Stuart Puritanism," 216.

<sup>65</sup> Bremer, *Lay Empowerment and the Development of Puritanism*, 125.

That dazzled eyes beholding much shall wonder  
At that thy settled Peace, thy wealth and splendour...<sup>66</sup>

England will overthrow heresy—in the form of Rome and Turkey—the Jewish nation will be converted to Christianity and worship with Gentile believers in “dayes of happinesse and rest...”<sup>67</sup> Like Bradstreet, Fenwick uses the Jews’ promised salvation and the restoration of Christ’s reign as a “legacie” to comfort Puritan Christians in the present tribulation. Directing her readers to God’s promised restoration of persecuted Israel, she urges them to “never give [the Lord] rest,” she writes, “till he set up Jerusalem the praise of the world...”<sup>68</sup> It was this final, glorious revolution that many sought on both sides of the Atlantic: Christ’s establishment of his kingdom through communities—nations, even—of godly worshipers. Winthrop famously reminded his hearers that “wee shall be as a citty upon a hill” and that failure to follow God’s commands would “shame the faces of many of God’s worthy servants, and cause their prayers to be turned into curses upon us till wee be consumed out of the good land whither wee are a goeing.”<sup>69</sup>

In traveling to New England, Puritans would create a government that many, Bradstreet and Winthrop included, hoped to see incorporated into Christ’s glorious kingdom. Perhaps hyperbolically, Bradstreet concludes “The Poem” in her elegy on Elizabeth I by declaring:

No more shall rise or set such glorious Sun,  
Untill the heavens great revolution:  
If then new things, their old forms must retain,  
Eliza shall rule Albion once again.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Bradstreet, "A Dialogue," in *The Tenth Muse*, lines 7.41-3.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., line 7.79.

<sup>68</sup> Anne Fenwick, "The Saints Legacies," 198-9.

<sup>69</sup> Winthrop, "A Modell of Christian Charity," 47.

<sup>70</sup> Bradstreet, "In honour of that High and Mighty Princess," in *The Tenth Muse*, lines 3.1-6.

God might exalt or crush earthly kings according to his plan, but he also rewarded justice and godliness in each of his children. It is significant that the editors of *The Tenth Muse* placed “A Dialogue” at the end of “The Four Monarchies,” as if revolutionary England itself is the long-awaited fifth monarchy, Christ’s triumphant culmination of all those years of history. Because *The Tenth Muse* was printed without Bradstreet’s knowledge we cannot attribute to her this organization. The content of the two poems draws a sufficiently clear historical connection. God has orchestrated the events unfolding in Elizabethan, Jacobite, and Caroline England as a part of his plan of redemption, bringing glory to himself and—whether in heaven or on earth—the reward of eternal peace to his people.

This “honour, which shall not decay” is a significant theme in Bradstreet’s historical, political, and personal verse.<sup>71</sup> However, her longing for heavenly, rather than earthly treasure, functions as far more than a refrain to be repeated at suitable points in a historical narrative. Instead, “Of the vanity of all worldly creatures” provides an essential context, the lens through which Bradstreet interprets the world. In “The Four Monarchies,” “A Dialogue,” and even her elegy for Elizabeth I, Bradstreet does not insert herself among the rise and fall of kings. History itself simply illustrates her theology. The fall of Adam has woven violence and conflict into the very fabric of human existence, an existence still miraculously ennobled by God’s gracious employment of mankind in his mysterious purposes. Bradstreet can marvel at the conquests of Alexander *and* deplore his vices; both have been used by God. Similarly, in “Contemplations,” she celebrates nature’s exquisite beauty in a detail as small as the blended songs of the

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<sup>71</sup> Bradstreet, “Of the vanity of all worldly creatures,” in *The Tenth Muse*, line 45.

grasshopper and cricket, “[s]eeming to glory in their little Art...”<sup>72</sup> Yet, she grieves almost in the same breath for the fate of humanity,

Living so little while we are alive;...  
So unawares comes on perpetual night,  
And puts all pleasures vain unto eternal flight.<sup>73</sup>

Bradstreet treasures beauty in nature and literature even as it fades. She shares this quality with Edward Taylor, a New England Puritan and pastor whose devotional literature employs complex imagery of ordinary things. Taylor’s passion for texture and color could spring only from, in Wilson Brissett’s words, “a culture that could understand beauty as central to personal spiritual transformation and social unity[.]”<sup>74</sup> A testimony to God’s creative love, nature surfaces repeatedly in the poetry of these New Englanders. Beautiful in itself, it also directs the reader toward its maker.

Of course, Bradstreet’s simultaneous rejection and celebration of the natural world has raised accusations of inconsistency from many critics. Here as elsewhere—in quaternions on “The Four Elements” and “The Four Seasons”—Bradstreet reveals a keen enjoyment of earthly beauty. Feminist scholar Wendy Martin sees this “paradoxically,” writing that “the more the poet

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<sup>72</sup> Bradstreet, "Contemplations," in *Several Poems*, line 9.4.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 17.4, 6-7. Michael Ditmore has dismissed “Contemplations” as devotional poetry, calling it a “mostly secular wisdom poem” (32) that fails to promote “an identifiably soteriological theme” (32). It is possible that Ditmore is interacting with a misunderstanding of the poem’s location in the canon; while scholars have interpreted “Contemplations” as devotional, it is included in *Several Poems* among poems that Bradstreet intended for publication, none of which contain devotional themes. This would confirm Ditmore’s thesis. However, Ditmore fails to explain stanzas 22-3 where Bradstreet petitions the river, an “Emblem true, of what I count the best,” (23.5) for the salvation of herself and her children. See Bradstreet, “Contemplations,” in *Several Poems*, stanzas 22-3; Ditmore, "Bliss Lost, Wisdom Gained: Contemplating Emblems and Enigmas in Anne Bradstreet's 'Contemplations'," *Early American Literature* 42, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 32-4. On the misplacement of “Contemplations” in the Hensley edition, see Thickstun, "Contextualizing Anne Bradstreet's Literary Remains," 413.

<sup>74</sup> Wilson Brissett, "Edward Taylor's Public Devotions," *Early American Literature* 44, no. 3 (2009): 457.

longs to transcend the world, the more she feels drawn by nature's power."<sup>75</sup> Other scholars have similarly accused Puritans of ignoring or loathing the natural world, as does Richard Weaver who argues that egotistical asceticism in Cotton Mather is simply to be expected of "the rigor of the Puritan outlook..."<sup>76</sup> Such statements paint a vivid picture of religious terrors, but they fail to engage with the diversity of Puritan literature. Certainly, some Puritan authors are of little earthly good. However, the choice to seek heaven rather than earth hardly equates to a cavalier dismissal of hard-earned wealth, fame, or the breathtaking beauty of the New England landscape. Bradstreet seeks a second, eternal life where she will enjoy these delights with greater understanding in God's company.<sup>77</sup>

Bradstreet expresses these ideas more lyrically than do some of her contemporaries, but she writes in accord with Puritan intellectuals, theologians, and artists. The vanity of this life is central to the writings of Puritans including Lady Grace Mildmay, Lady Brilliana Harley, John Winthrop, William Aspinall, Anne Fenwick, and Elizabeth Jocelin. Common to Puritan political analysis, spiritual advice, autobiographies, elegies for loved ones, historiography, practical theology, and poetry is the lens through which the writers—and the readers—understand human experience. Wealth and fame in and of themselves are not sinful—indeed, as Elizabeth Jocelin

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<sup>75</sup> Wendy Martin, "Anne Bradstreet's Poetry: A Study of Subversive Piety," in *Shakespeare's Sisters: Feminist Essays on Women Poets*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), 29.

<sup>76</sup> Richard M. Weaver, "Two Diarists," in *In Defense of Tradition: Collected Shorter Writings of Richard M. Weaver, 1929-1963*, ed. Ted J. Smith, III (Liberty Fund, 2001), 731.

<sup>77</sup> Timothy Whelan observes that "Bradstreet demonstrates a Reformed view of meditation that involves both human and divine knowledge, encompassing the majestic works of creation as well as the redemptive work of the 'Majesty' of the universe, God Himself." From this perspective, worldly things are tainted with sin and will pass away, but this does not negate their created beauty or their capacity for good. See Timothy Whelan, "'Contemplations': Anne Bradstreet's Homage to Calvin and Reformed Theology," *Christianity and Literature* 42, no. 1 (Autumn 1992): 50.

assures her child, “all these are great blessings...”<sup>78</sup> But they are blessings to be sought at their divine source. In this life, for sinners in a world torn by sin, earthly pleasures only distract from lasting fulfilment. All too soon, like the mariner wakened by a squall from his delusion of control,

Sad affliction comes & makes [them] see  
Here's neither honour, wealth, nor safety;  
Only above is found all with security.<sup>79</sup>

This is the vanity of worldly creatures. For a time they may squander or hoard their earthly pleasures, but they will not find stability. Peace eludes them.

But by placing their hope in Christ's promises, Puritan writers could hope for a better future. A life centered around God, the true source of happiness, gives them purpose; time spent in this life exploring God's character and serving him prepares them to enjoy his heavenly kingdom. Far from abstract, this idea provides them with personal comfort and with the power to comfort their readers: “In the troubles of the Church,” writes Anne Fenwick, “apply, Psal. 128. 6. *Thou shalt see peace upon Israel...*”<sup>80</sup> Of course, Puritans did not always agree on when Christ's kingdom would appear, or what part England would play. But while eschatological interpretations were hotly contested, they sprang from a unified source: a belief that this world, rife with sin and suffering, was passing away, but that a new world would replace it.

Most significant, perhaps, this framework enables Puritan authorship. Writers within the Puritan community composed letters, sermons, poems, and memoirs as “spiritual legacies.”

Whether they shared personal testimonies of God's faithfulness, outlined strategies for godly

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<sup>78</sup> Jocelin, *The Mothers Legacie*, 2.

<sup>79</sup> Bradstreet, “Contemplations,” in *Several Poems*, lines 32.6-7.

<sup>80</sup> Fenwick, “The Saints Legacies,” 195.



living, or addressed political crises, they directed their readers to “that living Christall fount” that brings not just spiritual, but holistic salvation:

Nor strength nor wisdom, nor fresh youth shall fade,  
Nor death shall see, but are immortall made,  
This pearl of price, this tree of life, this spring,  
Who is possessed of, shall reign a King.  
Nor change of state, nor cares shall ever see,  
But wear his Crown unto eternitie...<sup>81</sup>

By this act of writing—of recording and exploring God’s purpose in politics, history, and nature—Bradstreet and her fellow Puritan writers turned the hopes of their community toward a sovereign God.

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<sup>81</sup> The spelling of “Christall” in line 37 gives the line a clear double meaning—Christ was biblically portrayed as the fountain of life. Interestingly, the spelling has been changed in *Several Poems* to “Crystal,” robbing the word of its double meaning. As with most of the word changes in *Several Poems*, it is unclear whether the alteration was Bradstreet’s choice. Bradstreet, “Of the vanity of all worldly creatures,” in *The Tenth Muse*, lines 37, 39-44. See also Bradstreet, “The Vanity of all worldly things,” in *Several Poems*, line 37.

## Chapter 3

### Bradstreet on Practical Theology and Suffering

In the years following the publication of *The Tenth Muse*, Bradstreet's attention turned toward domestic challenges.<sup>1</sup> Now established as a commonwealth, Massachusetts Bay preserved ties to the mother country, but followed its own path of religious and political growth. This relative stability was the backdrop for Bradstreet's personal poems and prose. She had, with Simon, built a home in Newtowne in 1631.<sup>2</sup> Many of their friends lost their lives to illness during that frigid winter, and Bradstreet probably helped to nurse Lady Arbella, sister to the Earl of Lincoln, who died the same year.<sup>3</sup> Around this time, Bradstreet wrote her earliest dated poem, "Upon a Fit of Sickness, Anno. 1632, Aetatis sua, 19." Her health had never been stable, and in the frigid New England climate, illness reasserted itself. At the age of nineteen, she grappled with death. The poem does not minimize the gravity of her situation; her anxiety and grief are palpable:

For what's this life, but care and strife?...  
Our strength doth waste, our time doth hast [sic],  
and then we go to th' Tomb.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The poems of *The Tenth Muse*, as well as the elegies on Bradstreet's parents included in the main portion of *Several Poems*, contain marked stylistic differences. In light of recent historiography on manuscript culture, Bradstreet's stylistic choices seem to have varied with her intended audience. See Whelan, "'Contemplations': Anne Bradstreet's Homage to Calvin and Reformed Theology," *Christianity and Literature* 42, no. 1 (Autumn 1992): 42-3.

<sup>2</sup> Rosamond Rosenmeier, *Anne Bradstreet Revisited*, Twayne's United States Authors Series (Twayne Publishers, 1991), 74.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>4</sup> This poem was published posthumously in *Several Poems* in 1678, where it was appended in the "private" collection. Bradstreet, "Upon a Fit of Sickness, Anno 1632. Aetatis sua, 19," in *Several Poems Compiled with Great Variety of Wit and Learning, Full of Delight*, 2nd ed. (Boston: Printed by John Foster, 1678), lines 13, 15-6.

Fragile health, combined with the harsh New England climate, reinforced the closeness of death for Bradstreet. Many other poems published posthumously or preserved in the Andover Manuscript record her recovery from sickness or her prayers to God for healing.<sup>5</sup> From events like these, Bradstreet crafted a personal history.

Timothy Whelan notes the importance of recognizing that “Despite significant changes in form, content, and voice, Bradstreet's poetry and prose are concerned from beginning to end with a 'public' audience. She is never writing in a 'private' sense only to herself.”<sup>6</sup> This is clear even in the poems and journal entries of the Andover Manuscript; Bradstreet’s son Simon, who meticulously copied them, includes commentary on the time and occasion of various poems. His efforts to create a readable manuscript of Bradstreet’s unpublished work suggests that he was completing a task she had initiated, a reading confirmed by his note at the end of her “Meditations Divine and Morall,” where he writes that “my hon<sup>d</sup> and dear mother intended to have filled up this Book wth the like observations but was pvented by Death.”<sup>7</sup> Simon follows this statement with copies of his mother’s poetry, memoirs, and journal entries. By compiling these, he prepares the “Book,” now referred to as the Andover Manuscript for future reading.<sup>8</sup> As

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<sup>5</sup> See Bradstreet, “To my dear children,” in *Meditations Divine and Morall: Manuscript, 1664-1672?*, ed. and trans. Simon Bradstreet, 1664, MS Am 1007.1, Stevens Memorial Library Deposit, Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, seq. 48.

<sup>6</sup> Whelan, “'Contemplations': Anne Bradstreet's Homage to Calvin and Reformed Theology,” 42.

<sup>7</sup> See Bradstreet, *Meditations*, seq. 44.

<sup>8</sup> Although the Andover manuscript was unpublished until John Harvard Ellis’s 1867 edition of Bradstreet’s works, it contains most of Bradstreet’s personal poetry and all of her prose. John Foster’s 1678 edition of *Several Poems* did include personal poems that Bradstreet does not seem to have intended for print publication. These include elegies on the deaths of her grandchildren and daughter-in-law, love poems to her husband, and a number of poems on significant events in Bradstreet’s life including the absences of loved ones and her many illnesses. Some of these are dated; most of the dated poems and prose in the Andover manuscript fall between 1660 and 1670. Others could have been written at virtually any point during Bradstreet’s life in New England. The title of Bradstreet’s earliest known poem, “Upon a Fit of

in her historical, scientific, and political verse, Bradstreet employs Puritan theology as the framework for her creative expression in these poems and in those added to *Several Poems*. Not only does God lead his people to security through the cyclical and linear narratives of history; he also guides each saint on a journey physical and spiritual.

Only a year after writing “A Dialogue” in 1642, Bradstreet faced personal tragedy: her “Dear and Ever-Honoured Mother” died at the age of 61 on December 27, 1643. In true elegiac fashion, Bradstreet extolls Dorothy Dudley’s virtues: not only was she the “loving mother and obedient wife” that have become synonymous with Puritan womanhood, but also “wisely awful” to her servants and,

A true instructor of her family,  
The which she ordered with dexterity.<sup>9</sup>

This poem was added to *Several Poems* posthumously and seems to have been prepared for publication by Bradstreet herself, as it is not among the appended “private” poems added by the editor. However, it was omitted from *The Tenth Muse* in 1650, suggesting either that it was written much later or that, because of its personal nature, Bradstreet did not choose to include it in *The Tenth Muse* manuscript. The Bradstreets and Dudleys had relocated to Ipswich around

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Sickness, Anno. 1632. Aetatis Sua, 19,” confirms that she was already writing poetry during her first years in New England. While we can only speculate, it seems probable that Bradstreet would have experimented with poetry before this point. Too often, *The Tenth Muse* is discussed in isolation from Bradstreet’s other texts on the assumption that it marks a clearly defined epoch of imitative writing. This assumption, not always explicitly stated, is especially evident in literary analysis where lack of historiographical context is compounded with lack of textual context. This has resulted in imaginings of discord between Bradstreet’s public and private voices, which in turn speaks to isolation of literary scholarship from the history of Puritan culture. See Louisa Hall, “The Influence of Anne Bradstreet’s Innovative Errors.,” *Early American Literature* 48, no. 1 (March 1, 2013): 1-27; Tamara Harvey, “‘Now Sisters... Impart Your Usefulness, and Force’: Anne Bradstreet’s Feminist Functionalism in *The Tenth Muse* (1650),” *Early American Literature* 35, no. 1 (2000): 5-28.

<sup>9</sup> Bradstreet, “An Epitaph On my dear and ever honoured Mother Mrs. Dorothy Dudley, Who deceased Demb. 27. 1643, and of her age, 61:,” in *Several Poems*, lines 1.3, 6, 8-9.

1635 where they were next-door neighbors, so Bradstreet would have enjoyed the emotional support and household assistance of Dorothy Dudley and her other daughters during the births and early years of her children.<sup>10</sup> She must have keenly felt the loss of her mother's guidance. In spite of these responsibilities—or perhaps because of them—she wrote prolifically during this time. She would have read prolifically as well; she had access to her parents' large library as well as that of her own.<sup>11</sup>

Inserted just prior to her mother's epitaph is Bradstreet's record of a second tragedy. Thomas Dudley had died in July of 1653, just three years after his daughter's already famous poems appeared in print. "If any Godly men out of Religious Ends will come over, to help us in the good Work we are about: I think they cannot dispose of themselves, nor of their Estates more to God's Glory, and the furtherance of their own Reckoning....," Dudley had written to the Countess of Lincoln in a history of Massachusetts Bay, the publication of which Cotton Mather would later reference with pride.<sup>12</sup> Dudley was enterprising from the start; he could also be controlling, as Hutchinson, Cotton, and others had found to their grief. It is likely that Bradstreet and her husband would have knocked heads with her father in 1646 when Simon, along with influential men like Bradstreet's brother-in-law, John Winthrop Jr., advocated for civil reform allowing Presbyterians to vote on political questions despite their exclusion from Congregationalist church membership.<sup>13</sup> Despite all this, Dudley had battled ferociously to preserve New England's reputation and stability, and he had actively supported Bradstreet's

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<sup>10</sup> Rosenmeier, *Anne Bradstreet Revisited*, 75, 79.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>12</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, ed. Kenneth B. Murdock and Elizabeth W. Miller, Book II: *Ecclesiarum Clypei* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), 232.

<sup>13</sup> See Rosenmeier, *Anne Bradstreet Revisited*, 89-90. On Winthrop Jr.'s family connection to Anne Bradstreet, see *Ibid.*, 79.

literary endeavors.<sup>14</sup> Now he was dead with a farewell poem in his pocket. Bradstreet responded as she did throughout her life to illness, war, and death: she picked up her quill pen and wrote.

Bradstreet's elegy on her father affirmed God's personal presence in his life. She also spoke to the universal human experience of loss. Puritan women writers often experienced profound grief in sickness, miscarriages, and the loss of older children. Bradstreet's memoirs record that "lingering sickness" during her first years in New England, possibly the one referenced in "Upon a Fit of Sickness," was followed by a period of childlessness that deeply distressed her.<sup>15</sup> Her deep admiration of her own mother and her childhood in Elizabeth Clinton's household must have made this extremely difficult, as she would have heard motherhood discussed intellectually and positively by women she respected. One of the more widely published books by Puritan women during the early 1600s, *The Mothers Legacie, To her unborne Childe* resulted from Elizabeth Jocelin's premonitions of death in childbirth.<sup>16</sup> In "The Epistle Dedicatorie," Jocelin writes to her husband expressing her fear that death would prevent her from caring for her child's spiritual state.<sup>17</sup> Temporal blessings, while enjoyable, would not

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<sup>14</sup> Bradstreet, "To the Memory of my dear and ever honoured Father Thomas Dudley Esq; Who deceased, July 31. 1653, and of his Age, 77.," in *Several Poems*, lines 1.23-38; Anne Bradstreet, "To her Father with some verses," in *Several Poems*, lines 1-4.

<sup>15</sup> See Bradstreet, "To my dear children," in *Meditations*, seq. 47.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Thickstun posits that Bradstreet may have read *The Mothers Legacie* during her childhood in England during its series of reprints after Jocelin's death. The similarities in focus are certainly striking at times. Entrusting her child to her husband's guidance, Jocelin explains that she avoided speaking to him directly about her death because she wanted to spare him grief. In an undated poem, "Before the Birth of one of Her Children," Bradstreet tries to comfort Simon and urges him to protect their children after her death. See Thickstun, "Contextualizing Anne Bradstreet's Literary Remains: Why We Need a New Edition of the Poems," *Early American Literature* 52, no. 2 (2017): 393; Elizabeth Jocelin, "The Epistle Dedicatorie," in *The Mothers Legacie, to Her Unborne Childe* (London: Printed by Iohn Hauiland, for William Barret, 1624), n.p. See also Bradstreet, "Before the Birth of one of her Children," in *Several Poems*, lines 5-8.

<sup>17</sup> Jocelin, "The Epistle Dedicatorie," in *The Mothers Legacie*, n.p.

be enough to bring her child true happiness.<sup>18</sup> Instead, her greatest wish is that the child could “bee an inheritour of the Kingdome of Heaven.”<sup>19</sup> Like Bradstreet, Jocelin warns that worldly pleasures will prove fleeting.<sup>20</sup> As she awaits her own possible death, perhaps only weeks away, Jocelin uses her personal danger rhetorically as she urges her child to remain faithful to God.

Historians of Puritanism have often criticized these cultural responses to sorrow, especially in literature where authors present a restrained, “authorized channel for grief...” rather than a realistic reaction to suffering.<sup>21</sup> Scholars have attributed this stoicism in Puritan literature to Calvinist theology through which “God’s testing never ceased, permitting no rest for the Puritan conscience” with individual Puritans experiencing various levels of divine support in sorrow.<sup>22</sup> Bradstreet, Jocelin, and others would have experienced agonizing pressure from family members, godly writers, and weekly sermons to demonstrate their faith through humility even under crushing trials. This would have impeded the writers’ authenticity and stylistic experimentation. Amanda Porterfield has observed that “Bradstreet’s discreet defiances against God” at once challenge and coincide with the introspective nature of Puritan theology through

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<sup>18</sup> Jocelin, *The Mothers Legacie*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>21</sup> Referencing a treatise on the deaths of children which she argues is typical of Puritan literature, Elizabeth Clarke writes that the pamphlet “insists that the pain of the rod of God’s affliction has been precisely calculated for the particular believer who feels it” (71). Elizabeth Clarke, “A Heart Terrifying Sorrow’: The Deaths of Children in Seventeenth-Century Women’s Manuscript Journals,” in *Representations of Childhood Death*, ed. Gillian Avery and Kimberley Reynolds, 1st ed. (Macmillan Press, 2000), 71.

<sup>22</sup> Wendy Martin, “Anne Bradstreet’s Poetry: A Study of Subversive Piety,” in *Shakespeare’s Sisters: Feminist Essays on Women Poets*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), 23.

expressions of fear and unbelief that in themselves acknowledge God's magnificent—if arbitrary—power.<sup>23</sup>

This interpretation of Puritan writings on pain, however, assumes a strict dichotomy between physical and spiritual realms. As has been discussed in previous chapters, this assumption in turn ignores the harmony of the Puritan's spiritual and physical life. While Puritan theologians certainly argued that God used trials to guide and instruct the godly, sin was not necessarily viewed as the exclusive cause for present suffering. Illnesses of the mind, as well as of the body, could play a part in a godly person's distress. Hannah Allen, a member of a moderate Puritan community in post-Restoration England, believed she had sinned beyond God's forgiveness and repeatedly attempted suicide. An anonymous note "To the Reader" in her memoirs describes a symbiotic relationship between the soul and body. Both are affected by "melancholy" for which "both physicians and ministers [used] a combination of medical and spiritual cures to help her."<sup>24</sup> Lucas Hardy has noted Bradstreet's early application of this concept from a scientific standpoint in *The Tenth Muse*.<sup>25</sup> Bradstreet recognized the important contributions made to the study of diseases by the medical community, but she also understood illness as both a physical *and* spiritual issue.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Porterfield, *Female Piety in Puritan New England : The Emergence of Religious Humanism*, Religion in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 115.

<sup>24</sup> This book was published in 1683 after Allen's death. See "10. Hannah Allen," in *Flesh and Spirit: An Anthology of Seventeenth-century Women's Writing*, ed. Rachel Adcock, Sara Read, and Anna Ziomek (Manchester University Press, 2016), 236-7.

<sup>25</sup> Lucas Hardy argues that, in Bradstreet's "Of the Four Ages of Man" and "Of the four Humours in Mans constitution," she takes issue with prevailing medical analyses of the brain by instead "redefining cognition as a personal phenomenon and not as a humoral abstraction." Hardy, "No Cure: Anne Bradstreet's Frenzied Brain," *Women's Studies* 43, no. 3 (April 1, 2014): 328.

<sup>26</sup> In "Of the four Humours in Mans constitution," Bradstreet observes that Melancholy is not responsible for "Cough, nor Quinsie, nor the burning Feavor" (line 130); these she attributes to Cholera and Blood. Melancholy herself confesses: "My sicknesse chiefly in conceit



At the time of her father's death, Bradstreet was forty years old. She was the wife of a prominent politician, a writer respected in Old England and New, and oversaw a household of eight children as well as servants in Andover where they "owned a sawmill and considerable land."<sup>27</sup> During this time, Simon Bradstreet served as an "Assistant" of the Massachusetts Bay Company and therefore a member of the General Council.<sup>28</sup> Like Dorothy Bradstreet, Anne Bradstreet was a woman of eminent political, financial, and social status and would have taken responsibility for the financial struggles of her neighbors.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, a recurring threat to the survival of the Bradstreets was illness. Again and again, Bradstreet faced the possibility of death in the midst of terrible pain, an ordeal made worse by her concern for her children's safety after her death.<sup>30</sup> Many of Bradstreet's personal poems address these frequent experiences. Because recurring illnesses prostrated both herself and her family members, disease in a way became Bradstreet's nemesis. She recorded its ravages faithfully over the next twenty years. In these poems, however, she did more than plead for healing; she claimed that illness was subservient to a higher purpose working in her favor.

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doth lye,/ What I imagine, that's my malady./" (lines 132-3). Robert Hilliker notes that, while the elegies remain theologically orthodox, they are "quite prominently marked by emotive touches that evince her symbolic investment in her family." Puritanism and humanity, even in these extreme circumstances, are not incompatible for her. Bradstreet, "Of the foure Humours in Mans constitution," in *The Tenth Muse*, 36; Hilliker, "Engendering Identity: The Discourse of Familial Education in Anne Bradstreet and Marie De L'Incarnation," *Early American Literature* 42, no. 3 (November 2007): 443.

<sup>27</sup> Rosenmeier, *Anne Bradstreet Revisited*, 90.

<sup>28</sup> The Massachusetts Bay Company charter, according to Francis Bremer, "granted control over the colony to the body of investors (freemen) who met regularly in a General Court to approve policies and who annually chose a Governor and his Assistants to govern the colony between meetings of the Court." Bremer, "7 - The Puritan Experiment in New England, 1630-1660," in *The Cambridge Guide to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 128.

<sup>29</sup> Bradstreet, "An Epitaph On my dear and ever honoured Mother," in *Several Poems*, lines 4-7.

<sup>30</sup> Bradstreet, "Before the Birth of one of her Children.," in *Several Poems*, lines 22-4.

These event-based poems typically follow a pattern. Bradstreet begins by describing her physical suffering, often at length, and her consequent fears. Beth Doriani has observed similarities between Davidic psalms, with which Bradstreet would have been intimately familiar, and Bradstreet's poems on illness. Through recounting God's gracious healing, she is able to "affirm God's trustworthiness as she petitions Him for help."<sup>31</sup> This leads to a poetic prayer to God for healing or emotional support followed by God's compassionate response. For example, in an early poem "Upon some distemper of body," Bradstreet begins by recalling the "wasting pains" and "tossing slumbers" from which she suffered.<sup>32</sup> She describes, too, her emotional distress, suggesting a connection for her between physical illness and depression. Desperation leads her to prayer:

...looking up unto his Throne on high,  
Who sendeth help to those in misery...<sup>33</sup>

Interestingly enough, Bradstreet does not expect immediate physical relief. Instead, God "chac'd away those clouds" of depression and enabled her to see her "Anchor cast i'th' vale with

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<sup>31</sup> Several scholars has noted Bradstreet's use of a similar structure to biblical psalms in her later poetry; the speaker begins by describing suffering or fear, then petitions God for help, and closes by praising God for his deliverance. Constance Furey notes the contrast between Bradstreet's methodology and that of later American Puritan poet Edward Taylor, who more often modeled his poetry, with its rich, complex imagery, after the Song of Songs. On "relational virtue" in both poets, see Constance Furey, "Relational Virtue: Anne Bradstreet, Edward Taylor, and Puritan Marriage," *Journal of Medieval & Early Modern Studies* 42, no. 1 (2012): 202. See also Beth M. Doriani, "'Then Have I... Said with David': Anne Bradstreet's Andover Manuscript Poems and the Influence of the Psalm Tradition," *Early American Literature* 24, no. 1 (1989): 65.

<sup>32</sup> It is possible that this poem was written even before "A Dialogue between Old England and New" in 1642. It is positioned between "Upon a Fit of Sickness," dated 1632, and "Before the Birth of one of her Children" in *Several Poems*. This section seems to be organized in some kind of rough chronology because the themes progress from early illness to fears of childbirth to concern over Simon Bradstreet's travels on government business to the deaths of grandchildren. Unfortunately, however, the date for this poem cannot be conclusively fixed. Bradstreet, "Upon some distemper of body," in *Several Poems*, lines 2-3.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, lines 7-8.

safety...,” reassuring her of her spiritual security in Christ.<sup>34</sup> In the poem’s final couplet, Bradstreet describes God’s healing of both her “Soul” and her “flesh” as a holistic restoration to mental and physical health.<sup>35</sup> Not only is she spared physical pain; God also rescues her from her fear.

Fear was a common ailment of the Puritan believer, one which Puritan writers often approached through a theology of assurance.<sup>36</sup> In 1649, the English Puritan Lady Mary Carey wrote a dialogue between her soul and body following the loss of her infant child—the third child she had buried. Body mourns: “I am now near the time of my Travel, & am very weak, faint, sickly, fearful, pained, apprehending much sufferings before me, if not Death it self [sic], the King of Terrors.”<sup>37</sup> Carey comforts herself with Soul’s response: “For thy own weakness be not discouraged... Faith looks at God, only as all-sufficient...”<sup>38</sup> Solace is found, not through denial of fear, but through faith that God will overcome both the trial and the fear of it.

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid., lines 9-10.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., lines 11-12.

<sup>36</sup> Hannah Allen also recounts the united efforts of the godly community to overcome her fear of God’s judgment. For several years, she stayed with her mother, her aunt and uncle, and with the families of several ministers, all of whom encouraged her to attend sermons and dinners with friends in order to avoid despondent reflections. Her mother and aunt also took her to London to be treated by physicians, “there being the best means both for Soul and Body...” Interestingly, this text is composed of several manuscripts: Allen’s autobiographical reflections interspersed with her prayers and diary entries and occasional narrations by an anonymous female author. See Hannah Allen, *A Narrative of God's Gracious Dealings with That Choice Christian Mrs. Hannah Allen (afterwards Married to Mr. Hatt.) Reciting The Great Advantages the Devil Made of Her Deep Melancholy, and the Triumphant Victories, Rich and Sovereign Graces, God Gave Her over All His Stratagems and Devices* (London: Printed by John Wallis, 1683), 26.

<sup>37</sup> Carey, "February, 11th 1649. A Dialogue Betwixt the Soul, and the Body.," in “Meditations and Poetry (1647-57),” in *Flesh and Spirit: An Anthology of Seventeenth-century Women's Writing*, ed. Rachel Adcock, Sara Read, and Anna Ziomek (Manchester University Press, 2016), 45.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 45.

Anne Fenwick explores this concept in *The Saints Legacies*, which had been circulated widely in manuscript while Anne Dudley was struggling with smallpox as a teenager. *The Saints Legacies* reached its second print edition in 1631, just as the newly-married Anne Dudley Bradstreet reached New England. Fenwick recognized that fear and grief in their severest forms required support from other, more experienced believers. “When thou art at the pits brinke of despaire, and art dryed up with sorrow, then go to some faithfull Preacher that is able to preach Christ to thee,” she writes.<sup>39</sup> In “weaknesse” and “sorrowes,” Fenwick urges the believer to apply promises of God’s forgiveness and rest, dwelling on God’s compassionate character.<sup>40</sup>

A few decades later, Elizabeth Major discussed a similar theme in *Honey on the Rod: Or a comfortable Contemplation For one in Affliction: With sundry Poems On several subjects*. Before its publication in 1665, *Honey on the Rod* had probably been circulated like most women’s writing in manuscript. Major repeatedly lists possibilities for sin. But she also gives compassionate advice to discouraged readers. “Therefore, my soul,” says Consolation, “since you see death thus conquered, be not all your life-time through fear subject to bondage...”<sup>41</sup> Major’s text points readers repeatedly towards God’s forgiveness and grace. In doing so, she explores the Puritan doctrine of sanctification through trials, assuring her readers that their suffering is not meaningless, but instead will guide them closer to a welcoming God. Further, her

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<sup>39</sup> Anne Fenwick, "The Saints Legacies: Or, A Collection of Certain Promises out of the Word of God (1631)," in *Anne Phoenix*, ed. David Como, Betty S. Travitsky, and Anne Lake Prescott, vol. 5, *The Early Modern Englishwoman: A Facsimile Library of Essential Works*, Series I: Printed Writings, 1500-1640: Part 4 (Routledge, 2006), 7.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 9, 12-3.

<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth Major, *Honey on the Rod: Or a Comfortable Contemplation for One in Affliction; with Sundry Poems on Several Subjects* (London: Printed by Tho: Maxey, 1656), 137.

introductory note validates her status as an author by sharing her own experience of the “bondage” of suffering.<sup>42</sup>

These spiritual and physical challenges were profoundly significant to Puritan women writers. Bradstreet’s exploration of these themes, however, has been obscured at times by accusations that she effaces herself in her writings, which in turn leads to dismissal of Bradstreet’s authenticity in discussion of God’s presence in pain.<sup>43</sup> Previous examination of *The Tenth Muse* has demonstrated her early verse to be anything but self-effacing: a confident, if sometimes derivative, interaction with science, history, and theology. Among interpretations of her later writings, however, there is a sense of being cheated. Perhaps we are looking for *Of Plymouth Plantation*, lady-style and in verse, complete with juicy gossip on the General Council and character studies of the ministers—John Cotton, John Wilson, Thomas Shepard—who have engrossed New England scholarship. It is commonly assumed that Bradstreet’s writings as a whole are “decidedly non-biographical” apart from her memoir.<sup>44</sup> “To my dear children” has thus become one of Bradstreet’s most scrutinized texts, from which is wrestled a narrative of spiritual doubt as from an uncooperative witness determined to be silent. Such an analysis, however, presupposes masculine, “public” priorities for Bradstreet instead of listening to her later texts.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., n.p.

<sup>43</sup> See Ditmore, "Bliss Lost, Wisdom Gained: Contemplating Emblems and Enigmas in Anne Bradstreet's 'Contemplations'," *Early American Literature* 42, no. 1 (March 1, 2007): 41; Eberwein, "Civil War and Bradstreet's 'Monarchies'," *Early American Literature* 26, no. 2 (January 1, 1991): 120-1.

<sup>44</sup> Gordon, "A Different, More Complicated Bradstreet: Interview With Charlotte Gordon," interview by Elizabeth Ferszt and Ivy Schweitzer, *Women's Studies* 43. No. 3, April 2014, 373.

<sup>45</sup> Erica Longfellow addresses this in the context of other women writers such as the Puritan Lucy Hutchinson, writing that “The truth is that our gendered assumptions about public and private behaviour – based in large part on outdated scholarship of Victorian ‘separate

Experience of God's guidance is a unique element of Puritan writing, especially among women. When reading authors like Major, the godly community could be assured that the writer was sharing a factual testimony from which she had already gleaned personal benefit. This autobiographical element has sometimes been interpreted as tethering women writers to the stake of domesticity. However, recent scholarship has revealed that the Puritan community regularly employed testimony within the gathered church where both women and men shared God's workings in their lives.<sup>46</sup> Confidence in the Holy Spirit's ministry to each believer enabled Puritan laity to contribute authoritatively—guided by Puritan theology, of course—for the encouragement and instruction of their readers or hearers. In theologically radical Puritan churches, but more often among Separatist dissenters, this led to verbal testimony before the church from congregants of both sexes.<sup>47</sup> Early New England churches seem to have employed similar testimony from aspiring church members prior to the restriction of lay participation that followed the Antinomian Controversy.<sup>48</sup> Universally popular, however, was written autobiography. Indeed the use of this genre by Puritan women writers often facilitated strategic defense of the writer from misogyny. In response to criticism, Puritan women writers could and

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spheres' ideology – hold true only some of the time and for only some early modern texts” (204). Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 204.

<sup>46</sup> Andrew Cambers commends historians such as Patrick Collinson and Nicholas Tyacke whose work, “[w]hile still rooted in an understanding of ecclesiology and theology, the debate thus encompasses other aspects of the Puritan style of religiosity, such as sermon gadding, fasting and prayer, social networks, and conferences, which were also central to Puritan religious identity.” Andrew Cambers, "Reading, the Godly, and Self-Writing in England, circa 1580–1720," *Journal of British Studies* 46, no. 4 (October 2007): 800.

<sup>47</sup> Bremer, *Lay Empowerment and the Development of Puritanism* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire (GB): Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 35-7; Westerkamp, *Women in Early American Religion 1600-1850: The Puritan and Evangelical Traditions*, Christianity and Society in the Modern World (London: Routledge, 1999), 11.

<sup>48</sup> See Morgan, "Chapter 3: The New England System," in *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1965), 64-112.

did argue that they simply related factual evidence of God's work in their lives. Unless their writing explicitly contradicted orthodox theology, this left small room for dismissal from pessimists so inclined.

A later example of autobiography in the New England community is Mary Rowlandson's famous account of her family's murder and her captivity under the Narragansetts. This account was published in 1682 in Cambridge as a part of the colony's growing print culture. In *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God*, Rowlandson commemorates her eldest sister, whose death she witnessed and who had previously struggled with assurance of salvation. She overcame these fears, Rowlandson says, when "it pleased God to make that precious Scripture take hold of her heart, 2 Cor. 12. 9. And he said unto me my Grace is sufficient for thee. More then [sic] twenty years after I have heard her tell how sweet and comfortable that place was to her..."<sup>49</sup>

Rowlandson also testifies to God's goodness in the horrors of her captivity. After her six-year-old child died in her arms from starvation and injury, Rowlandson slept beside the corpse and tried to carry it with her. Only later did she realize that God had protected her from losing her "reason and senses" and committing suicide.<sup>50</sup> Testimonies like Rowlandson's served to strengthen the faith of fearful believers while affirming the writer's authenticity.

Bradstreet would not have relied on personal experience to validate her work as literature. In this respect, her later writings are more similar to those of the Puritan Lucy Hutchinson, writing in the mid-to-late seventeenth century in England. Hutchinson's grief-laden elegies on her husband's death and the failure of Parliamentary government have been recently brought to

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<sup>49</sup> Mary Rowlandson, *The Sovereignty & Goodness of God, Together, With the Faithfulness of His Promises Displayed; Being a Narrative Of the Captivity and Restarration of Mrs. Mary Rowlandson*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Printed by Samuel Green, 1682), 4.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

attention by David Norbrook, who transcribed the manuscript in a scholarly article in 1993.<sup>51</sup> These elegies, like the poems of the Andover Manuscript, were preserved within the family manuscript collection for several centuries before publication.<sup>52</sup> However, Hutchinson was already a widely circulated and respected Puritan writer who had produced a translation of Lucretius as well as a biography of her husband, Colonel John Hutchinson, that detailed the Hutchinsons' efforts at extreme political reform.<sup>53</sup> Like Hutchinson, Bradstreet had already been positively received by her community as an author. Autobiographical writing, then, was hardly a reversion to stereotypical housewifely modesty.<sup>54</sup> Instead, the New England poetess and politician's wife explores God's faithfulness to her. In doing so, she leaves a legacy for her family that will guide them spiritually and intellectually, much like Elizabeth Jocelin's *A Mothers Legacie*.<sup>55</sup> God, she promises her children, has been present with her in her worst

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<sup>51</sup> See David Norbrook and Lucy Hutchinson, "Lucy Hutchinson's 'Elegies' and the Situation of the Republican Woman Writer (with Text)," *English Literary Renaissance* 27, no. 3 (Autumn 1997): 468-521.

<sup>52</sup> Norbrook, "Lucy Hutchinson's 'Elegies,'" 468.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 468-9. On the elegies in the context of Hutchinson's *Life*, see Erica Longfellow, "Chapter 6: The transfiguration of Colonel Hutchinson in Lucy Hutchinson's elegies," in *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England*, 183-208.

<sup>54</sup> Scholars such as Allison Giffen and Jane Eberwein have argued that Puritan women writers including Bradstreet conformed to strict societal guidelines that censured writing outside of maternal and domestic topics. While there are clear evidences of systemized misogyny within some Puritan circles, such a generalized statement fails to interact with the variety of texts by Puritan women that fall outside of or interpret creatively these guidelines. Allison Giffen, "'Let No Man Know': Negotiating the Gendered Discourse of Affliction in Anne Bradstreet's 'Here Follows Some Verses Upon the Burning of Our House, July 10th, 1666,'" *Legacy* 27, no. 1 (2010): 3-11; Eberwein, "Civil War and Bradstreet's 'Monarchies,'" *Early American Literature* 26, no. 2 (January 1, 1991): 121, 124.

<sup>55</sup> Stephanie Pietros' insight on Bradstreet's interest in her own legacy, both familial and literary, beautifully synthesizes "continuities" (66) within Bradstreet's texts as a whole. This, Pietros suggests, establishes Bradstreet's place in both the British and American canons of literature. From a historical standpoint, this returns us to the importance of textual analysis grounded in factual context. Historians cannot allow categories to separate evidence in a world so deeply interconnected. See Pietros, "Anne Bradstreet's 'dear remains': Children and the Creation of Poetic Legacy," *Early Modern Women: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 10, no. 1 (Fall



moments; he will be with them also. In sharing her wisdom with her children, Bradstreet provides both for their welfare and for her own: “children,” as Stephanie Pietros has observed, “were considered in the early modern period to be the means of providing long-lasting and perpetual legacy...”<sup>56</sup> Thus, Bradstreet’s later poetry takes on a protective, as well as a meditative quality.

The opening lines of “For Deliver<sup>c</sup> from a fever,” one of the undated poems copied by Bradstreet’s son Simon in the Andover Manuscript, again connects mental with bodily suffering, “sorrows” and “paines within & out...”<sup>57</sup> Bradstreet vividly describes her physical agony, which included severe migraines, loss of speech, and a high fever that caused her “burning flesh” to “boyle...”<sup>58</sup> As in “Upon some distemper of body,” this debilitating illness causes Bradstreet to panic. She relates to God her downward spiral into fear:

Beclouded was my Soul with fear  
Of thy Displeasure Sore,  
Nor could I read my Evidence  
Wch oft I read before.<sup>59</sup>

Weakened by pain, Bradstreet worries that God is rejecting or punishing her. Her inability to “read [her] Evidence” of his work in her life can be interpreted on one level as physical incapacity brought on by the excruciating headaches to read her written records of God’s faithfulness. However, she is also crippled by her fear. Bradstreet’s memoirs describe struggles

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2015): 66-7; Elizabeth Jocelin, *The Mothers Legacie, to Her Unborne Childe* (London: Printed by Iohn Hauiland, for William Barret, 1624), 1-9.

<sup>56</sup> Pietros, "Anne Bradstreet's 'dear remains': Children and the Creation of Poetic Legacy," 49.

<sup>57</sup> Bradstreet, “For Deliver<sup>c</sup> from a fever,” in “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 52, lines 1-2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, seq. 52, lines 5-6, 8.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, seq. 52, lines 9-12.

with depression, “Sinkings & droopings” that intruded on times of spiritual peace.<sup>60</sup> She was “perplexed” by this discouragement and the lack of “constant joy” that she assumed to be common among other godly believers.<sup>61</sup> This sense of isolation is prominent in her poems on illness as she begs God to remain with her. However, Bradstreet’s solution is more akin to that of Anne Fenwick than Elizabeth Majors; instead of belaboring her sinfulness as might be expected, Bradstreet interprets her suffering—and its remedy—holistically. Sin of the soul she admits, but her soul’s fears are often caused by physical pain.

Occasionally, Bradstreet’s theology has been interpreted as self-silencing in times of sorrow; because she is expected to demonstrate exemplary piety and trust, scholars argue that she must avoid “expressing an inappropriate desire for what God is taking away from her.”<sup>62</sup> Accordingly, she forces herself to praise and worship God and swallows her grief and rage at his injustice. At one level, this interpretation takes a serious risk because it requires scholars to read for the purpose of inference, rather than identifying the stated meaning of the text. Further, such an interpretation fails to interact with Bradstreet’s texts in the context of Puritan authorship. Bradstreet describes her physical suffering at length, sometimes in excruciating detail. Passages in her memoirs interpret trials as God’s spiritual guidance and correction, but she does not use their theological significance to downplay her agony. Instead, Bradstreet finds comfort in the knowledge that these are meaningful challenges, rather than arbitrary accidents. In *The Tenth Muse*, she has traced God’s sovereign purpose in the rise and fall of the four monarchies and has presented England as the fifth monarchy, the reform of which would usher in God’s peaceful kingdom on earth. As poetic historian, Bradstreet created a history of courageous godliness for

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<sup>60</sup> Bradstreet, “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 49.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, seq. 49.

<sup>62</sup> Giffen, “‘Let No Man Know’: Negotiating the Gendered Discourse of Affliction,” 6.

her country. In the same way, her Puritanism now enables her to historicize her own personal narrative. Bradstreet connects physical events directly to the spiritual world through her meditation and her conversations with a personal, present God.<sup>63</sup>

From 1656 and onward, the Andover Manuscript contains a series of journal entries and poems that show greater attention to this narrative detail. Entries dated July 8th and August 28th, 1656 note “much weaknes & sicknes when my spirits were worn out, and many times my faith weak likewise...”<sup>64</sup> At the time, Bradstreet’s youngest son John would have been about four years old.<sup>65</sup> Both of these entries mention Bradstreet’s exhaustion and suffering and then address God directly in gratitude for his healing. In the entry of July 8th, Bradstreet transitions from prose to poetry. She praises God enthusiastically for his rescue and condemns those who rest their hopes on an earthly savior. Entries of May 11th and 13th, 1657 fall unusually close together; May 11th records severe illnesses “wch hath by fitts lasted all this spring till this 11 . may.”<sup>66</sup> To God’s grace Bradstreet’s attributes “some ability to preform ye dutyes I owe to him,

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<sup>63</sup> Lady Grace Mildmay’s autobiography and “Book of Meditations” is another example of paraphrases, meditations, prayers, and other texts in a collection typical of commonplace books at the time. The significance of these texts as theological instruction has largely been ignored, perhaps because they reference male Puritan authors. In his introduction to a transcription of this text, Randall Martin admits that he omits from Mildmay’s autobiography passages “in which Lady Mildmay amplifies or cites biblical authority for moral advice that intersperses her temporal recollections” (38). Martin’s confession highlights a need for scholarship that approaches the texts of Puritan women writers as authentic statements of studied belief unless historical research clearly demonstrates otherwise. Through this approach, key female authors such as Mildmay and Bradstreet can be recovered and understood as active agents, rather than fragmented stereotypes. Because orthodox women writers have been ignored in this way, we are only just beginning to discover the impact of their activity in the seventeenth century. See Mildmay, Lady Grace and Randall Martin, “The Autobiography of Grace, Lady Mildmay,” *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance Et Réforme*, New Series / Nouvelle Série, 18, no. 1 (Winter / Hiver 1994): 37-8.

<sup>64</sup> Bradstreet, “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 57.

<sup>65</sup> See Rosenmeier, *Anne Bradstreet Revisited*, 130.

<sup>66</sup> Bradstreet, “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 58.

and the work of my famely.”<sup>67</sup> A devotional poem two days later reflects on these sufferings through language reminiscent of “Contemplations.” Unlike the mariner caught in a tempestuous sea, Bradstreet writes:

I have a shelter from y<sup>e</sup> storm  
A shadow from y<sup>e</sup> fainting heat  
I have accesse unto his Throne,  
Who is a God so wondrous great.<sup>68</sup>

Another attack of “weaknes and fainting” on September 30th is noted as an instance of God’s “correction” which provides context for a concluding note addressed to her intended readers, her “dear children.”<sup>69</sup> She expresses her hope that this text will enable them to find safety in God should they meet with similar sufferings.

“To my dear children” is followed in the Andover Manuscript by Bradstreet’s record of other major events. One cause for anxious prayer was the voyage of her eldest son Samuel to study in England in November 1657—Samuel Bradstreet had graduated from Harvard four years before.<sup>70</sup> Another entry describes God’s healing from a serious illness in May 1661 after a 4-year period of good health.<sup>71</sup> A month later, Bradstreet praised God for her husband’s recovery from illness.<sup>72</sup> The restoration of the monarchy under Charles II threatened English Puritans with

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., seq. 58.

<sup>68</sup> Bradstreet, “May. 13. 1657.,” in “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 59, lines 4.1-2.

<sup>69</sup> Bradstreet, “Sept. 30. 1657.,” in “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 59-60. An editorial note on seq. 60 following Bradstreet’s signature ends “To my dear children.” Here, Simon notes that “In y<sup>e</sup> same book were upon special occasions the poems [illegible] wch follow added.” This confirms that “To my dear children” and several of the following poems copied by Simon Bradstreet came from another manuscript “book” that Bradstreet had created.

<sup>70</sup> See Bradstreet, “Upon my Son Samuel his goeing for England Novem. 6. 1657.,” in “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 60-1; Rosenmeier, *Anne Bradstreet Revisited*, 132.

<sup>71</sup> See Bradstreet, “May. 11. 1661.,” in “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 61-2.

<sup>72</sup> Interestingly, Simon the younger seems to have transcribed the poems out of order here; a later poem references Simon Bradstreet, Sr.’s journey to England in January 1661, followed by two poems exploring Bradstreet’s loneliness and receipt of Simon’s letters and a

stricter measures, a threat confirmed by the Act of Conformity in 1662 that forced radical, committed Puritans out of the Church of England or underground.<sup>73</sup> Under these unpromising conditions, Simon Bradstreet and another representative had traveled from Massachusetts Bay in January 1661. They successfully obtained a renewal of their royal charter although in exchange they promised “religious toleration” in the colony to the indignation of the “Massachusetts public.”<sup>74</sup> As Bradstreet waited for months to hear of Simon’s health and safety, his mission must have preyed upon her mind. His return in September 1662 occasioned a poem of thankfulness.<sup>75</sup>

As Bradstreet wrote her memoirs in 1664, she explored themes of illness, hardship, and isolation. This informed her advice to her children on communion with God; in the midst of relentless suffering, Bradstreet had repeatedly apostrophized him as an immediate, sympathetic presence. She explains that “I have found either some sin I lay under which God would have reformed, or some duty neglected which He would have performed” during soul-searching brought on by “losses in estate,” as well as her own or her children’s affliction.<sup>76</sup> Unsurprisingly,

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poem of praise for his return on September 3rd, 1662. It is possible that the date of Simon Bradstreet’s illness may have been transcribed incorrectly, or Bradstreet may have received news of the “ague” and his recovery by letter. See Bradstreet, “Upon my dear & Loving husband his going into England. Jan. 16. 1661.” in “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 64-6; Bradstreet, “In my Solitary hours in my dear husband his Absence.” in “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 66-7; Bradstreet, “In thankfull acknowledgment for y<sup>e</sup> Let I recd. from my husband out of England.” in “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 67-8; Bradstreet, “In thankfull rembrce for my dear husbands safe Arrivall. Sept. 3. 1662.” in “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 68-9.

<sup>73</sup> David D. Hall, “8 - New England, 1660–1730,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 143.

<sup>74</sup> Rosenmeier, *Anne Bradstreet Revisited*, 137.

<sup>75</sup> Bradstreet, “In thankfull rembrce for my dear husbands safe Arrivall. Sept. 3. 1662.” in “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 68-9.

<sup>76</sup> Bradstreet, “To my dear children,” in *Meditations*, seq. 48.

given her physical hardships, she struggles with spiritual doubts “concerning the verity of the Scriptures” and Catholic doctrines.<sup>77</sup> Prominent in Bradstreet’s autobiography, however, is the comfort of God’s grace. Instead of wallowing in self-abhorrence, Bradstreet explains that God has helped her to overcome these fears. Through writing, she not only reclaimed past suffering and preserved her spiritual legacy, but also, like Elizabeth Major and Hannah Allen, passed on her experiences to reassure her children of God’s faithfulness. While she submitted to God’s will, she presumed to understand his meaning and to record it.

Bradstreet’s exploration of suffering has been widely interpreted as internal conflict between her natural feelings of anger at God’s injustice and her attempts to force in herself a grateful response in line with Puritan theology. From this perspective, her illnesses and losses take on a sadistic quality; God afflicts her, and Bradstreet must accept that he is hurting her for his glory. Her “ghastly task,” writes Susan Wiseman, “is to find a way to understand what in her and her world might have provoked his actions.”<sup>78</sup> In fact, this is cited as one of the building blocks of Bradstreet’s Puritan theology—that a sovereign God chooses to hurt the godly and even kill their loved ones in order to draw their attention. According to some literary critics, this doctrine requires Puritan writers to “wrest productive knowledge from catastrophe” in order to defend God’s conduct.<sup>79</sup> However, analysis of Bradstreet’s narratives as strictly physical sickness brought on by strictly spiritual misconduct fails to acknowledge that, according to her, not just her body is ill. She is suffering from depression that arises from the loss of loved ones, from loneliness, or from physical pain. While Bradstreet instructs herself—and her readers—to

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<sup>77</sup> Ibid., seq. 50-1.

<sup>78</sup> Wiseman, "Anne Bradstreet's Poetry and Providence: Earth, Wind, and Fire," in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558-1680*, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 139.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 145.

seek God's grace rather than complaining or ignoring his correction, she does not fault herself for her discouragement. Instead, she praises God for upholding her through it. As Branka Arsić has observed, she "promotes a new hope: that suffering, which traverses every human experience of 'sweetness,' should not be a source of contempt for terrestrial life."<sup>80</sup> Bradstreet claims this life as her triumph with God over her circumstances. And her poetic praise accomplishes a triumph of its own.

Bradstreet's final poems are a striking testament to the hardship of colonial life. An elegy published in *Several Poems* records the death of a grandchild, Elizabeth Bradstreet, in August 1665.<sup>81</sup> This poem is followed by three more that commemorate two of Elizabeth's three siblings and her mother, Bradstreet's daughter-in-law. All three died within five months of each other in 1669 while their father and husband, Samuel Bradstreet, was away. To Samuel, Bradstreet wrote,

My bruised heart lies sobbing at the root,  
That thou, dear son, hath lost both tree and fruit.<sup>82</sup>

Another trial was the deadly fire described in Bradstreet's most famous poem, which is often titled by Simon's introductory note: "Here followes some verses upon y<sup>e</sup> burning of or house, July. 18<sup>th</sup>. 1666. copyed out of a loose paper."<sup>83</sup> It seems that Bradstreet had planned to finish "The Foure Monarchies" according to "An Apology" included at the end of "The Roman

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<sup>80</sup> Arsić interprets Bradstreet's enjoyment of this life as a heretical rejection of heavenly bliss. As has been demonstrated, such an argument assumes a contradiction between celebration of this life and anticipation of the next, a paradox that was not evident to Bradstreet. She does not deny earthly happiness; rather, it causes her to expect greater happiness to come. Arsić, "Brain-ache: Anne Bradstreet on Sensing," *ELH* 80, no. 4 (Winter 2013): 1040.

<sup>81</sup> Bradstreet, "In memory of my dear grand-child Elizabeth Bradstreet, who deceased August, 1665. being a year and half old.," in *Several Poems*, 248.

<sup>82</sup> Bradstreet, "To the memory of my dear Daughter in Law, Mrs. Mercy Bradstreet, who deceased Sept.6. 1669. in the 28. year of her Age.," in *Several Poems*, lines 7-8.

<sup>83</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, I have followed tradition by using this introductory note by Simon as the title of the poem. See Bradstreet, "Here followes some verses upon y<sup>e</sup> burning of or house, July. 18<sup>th</sup>. 1666. copyed out of a loose paper.," in *Meditations*, seq. 69.

Monarchy” in *Several Poems*. Here Bradstreet explains that she had repeatedly attempted to conclude the poem and had returned to it “when many years had past,” determined to complete it, but her “papers fell a prey to th’raging fire.”<sup>84</sup> Simon’s commentary and Bradstreet’s apology suggest that she was working on “The Roman Monarchy” as late as 1666, and also that other poems were probably lost in the flames.

Bradstreet’s final years, then, would have been spent rebuilding and refurnishing her Andover home. In “Here followes some verses,” she describes the traumatic moment when she “waken’d was with thundring nois” as screams alerted her to the danger.<sup>85</sup> Few of the Bradstreets’ belongings seem to have survived the fire. Bradstreet writes in present tense, as though reliving the event, that she

...coming out behold[s] a space  
The flame consume my dwelling place,  
And when I could no longer look  
I blest his Name yt gave & took...<sup>86</sup>

Her assurance that God intended this for her good did not silence her sorrow. Allison Giffen’s gendered reading of the poem argues that, in “opening up a (brief) space for grief” Bradstreet must forge a path apart from traditional, male-centered Puritan theology.<sup>87</sup> However, Bradstreet’s personal writings as a whole do not suggest such an interpretation. Consistent with her devastation at this material loss is Bradstreet’s confidence as God’s child. She freely mourns her lost possessions, describing at length her sorrow as she looks at the ruined structure. She recalls

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<sup>84</sup> Anne Bradstreet, “An Apology” in “The Foure Monarchies,” in *Several Poems*, lines 9, 14; Eberwein, “Civil War and Bradstreet’s ‘Monarchies,’” 119.

<sup>85</sup> Bradstreet, “Here followes some verses upon y<sup>e</sup> burning of or house,” in *Meditations*, seq. 69, line 3.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, seq. 69, lines 11-4.

<sup>87</sup> Giffen, “‘Let No Man Know,’” 16.



where specific belongings had been stored and the happy scenes of hospitality she had enjoyed there. And yet, she also reproves herself for grieving the least of God's good gifts:

Thou hast an house on high erect  
Fram'd by that mighty Architect...<sup>88</sup>

Her admonition is motivated by a consciousness that God has already blessed her and that he will continue to do so. Bradstreet can mourn for her beloved home as she has mourned in illness and loneliness throughout her earthly pilgrimage, but she does not despair. She expects of God something better than the Andover house.

As the wars of history are leading to Christ's triumphant return, so Bradstreet views her personal battles as preparation for a heavenly inheritance. This does not dismiss her suffering, but instead fills it with meaning. "As Weary Pilgrim," the only surviving poem in Bradstreet's handwriting, captures her expectation of this reward.<sup>89</sup> It is dated August 31, 1669, around the deaths of two of her grandchildren. Here she looks forward not only to the peace of heaven, but to the resurrection of her body "[b]y age and paines brought to decay..."<sup>90</sup> At last she will enjoy physical, "earthly" happiness that is not vanity because it will last forever:

A corrupt carcasse downe it lyes  
a glorious body it shall rise....  
Such lasting joyes shall there behold  
as eare ne'er heard nor tongue e'er told.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> Bradstreet, "Here followes some verses upon y<sup>e</sup> burning of or house," seq. 69, lines 43-4.

<sup>89</sup> This poem is included at the end of the Andover Manuscript following a number of blank pages. It is thus distinctly separate from "Meditations Divine and Morall" and "To my dear children," as well as from the other poems copied by Simon.

<sup>90</sup> Bradstreet, "As weary pilgrim, now at rest," in *Meditations*, seq. 102, line 21.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, seq. 103, lines 35-6, 41-2. The ink in this part of the manuscript has bled through both sides of the page, making it difficult to decipher the original spelling of "ne'er" and "e'er" in line 42. I have therefore used the spelling of these words as printed in the transcription of this poem in Jeannine Hensley's edition (which usually, but not consistently modernizes spelling). See Bradstreet, "As Weary Pilgrim," in *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, ed. Jeannine Hensley (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), line 42.

Her words are exhausted but exultant. She has faced tremendous hardship as an invalid, a refugee, a mother, and a reformer, and all these roles she has claimed with her pen. God's love has guided her study, and she has written of him.

Bradstreet's life, especially as recorded by herself, demonstrates the ability to balance a variety of beliefs and roles, even some that have been considered incompatible. Her early influences span a wide range from the Countess of Lincoln's authoritatively feminine medical treatise to John Cotton's compassionate spirituality to Thomas Dudley's political zeal. In her historical, medical, political, and personal poetry, Bradstreet reflects elements of all three without disharmony. Writers such as Anne Fenwick, Elizabeth Major, Brilliana Harley, and Elizabeth Jocelin are her predecessors or contemporaries. Hannah Allen, Lucy Hutchinson, and Mary Rowlandson are published after her death. With all of these women writers, Bradstreet's poetry and prose have something in common, whether in meditation on suffering, spiritual testimony, or political history.

Here are differences of gender, religious emphasis, and political inclination. It could be argued that these variations are insignificant because these authors, like Bradstreet, ultimately conform to orthodox Puritan doctrine. The theology behind their diversity is essentially the same. But this dismissal of creative culture based on its roots has too long isolated writers like Bradstreet or labeled them as ideologically irrelevant. Orthodox Puritanism is the foundation on which Bradstreet confidently builds her poetic exploration of her world. She can be clumsily imitative at times, as in "The Four Monarchies," but she is also independent, observant, and authoritative. She may question her appearance in print before an uncontrolled, less appreciative audience, but she does not question her ability to circulate poetry about herself, her family, her nation, or her religion. It is precisely because she believes the Puritan story—that she is guided

by a forgiving God, part of a triumphant history of spiritual and physical renewal—that she is empowered to interpret and study her world. Through this harmony of spiritual and physical, she traces the narrative of this life and anticipates the next.

## Conclusion

Anne Bradstreet's death in 1672 followed a final, torturous illness. Her place of burial is unknown. Her husband would go on to become governor of Massachusetts Bay, instrumental in preserving peace during conflict with Charles II. . He would also provide stable leadership for protesting New Englanders during James II's revocation of the charter and would act as governor during its restoration.<sup>1</sup> Six years after Bradstreet's death, a second edition of *The Tenth Muse* was published in London as *Several Poems* (1678) including elegies on her parents, "Contemplations," and other new additions. Simon Bradstreet, Jr. also transcribed his mother's poetry, journals, and autobiography. The resulting "small manuscript book" with entries in her own handwriting and his would remain within the family for generations "as a precious relic" until, nearly two hundred years later, John Harvard Ellis first edited its contents for publication in 1867.<sup>2</sup> Through the efforts of herself, her family, and her readers, Bradstreet's legacy was secured.

This body of work remains significant, not just in size, but also in substance. As has been discussed, Bradstreet's early poetry suggested political reforms, recounted history in meticulous detail, and discussed medicine and literature. In her later poetry and prose, she told her life-story, emphasizing the illnesses, deaths, and loneliness that she experienced. Puritanism in England dwindled with the Restoration during Bradstreet's final years.<sup>3</sup> New England, however,

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<sup>1</sup> Susan Ortmann, s.v. "Bradstreet, Simon (1603-1697)," in *Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia*, ed. Francis J. Bremer and Tom Webster, 1st ed. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2005), accessed March 21, 2018, Credo Reference.

<sup>2</sup> John Harvard Ellis, "Preface," preface to *The Works of Anne Bradstreet in Prose and Verse*, by Anne Bradstreet, ed. John Harvard Ellis (Charlestown: Abram E. Cutter, 1867), viii.

<sup>3</sup> John Morrill has observed that "Puritanism both triumphed and disintegrated in the English Revolution" (84). As in New England, the opportunities for control provided by Puritan

continued to expand geographically and economically. Bradstreet spent her final years in a settled colony that she had helped to build. Within this more stable framework, the travels and illnesses of herself and her family were as significant to her personal history as Alexander's conquest of Persia was to the rise and fall of kings. Through writing she provided for her children's spiritual safety and emotional stability, painting a remarkable portrait of New England Puritan life as a harmony between physical experience and spiritual discovery. She also spoke authoritatively of God's presence with her. Viewed holistically, Bradstreet's texts offer valuable insight into the creative breadth of Puritan theology, as well as the deeply personal significance of religion to the Puritan laywoman.

As more attention has been drawn to Bradstreet's authorship, scholars have questioned the false dichotomy that forces Bradstreet into opposite models of rebellion or submission. In 2010, Allison Giffen complained that both models have unnecessarily simplified Bradstreet's interaction with Puritan beliefs, failing to truly historicize the complexity of her world.<sup>4</sup> Historians such as Robert Hilliker, Tamara Harvey, Andrew Delbanco, and Alan Heimert have highlighted the importance of revisiting Bradstreet as a real, nuanced person in a literary culture instead of positing her work as "strange and marvelous singularity..."<sup>5</sup> And yet, while scholars

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political power pushed the movement towards homogeneity on one side and squabbling on the other. In Massachusetts Bay, magistrates and ministers united to settle the Antinomian Controversy through strict measures that, if they ultimately smothered religious emotion, at least temporarily forced colonists to stand together. The English Revolution, on the other hand, failed to maintain either unity or uniformity. See Morrill, "4 - The Puritan Revolution," in *The Cambridge Companion to Puritanism*, ed. John Coffey and Paul C. H. Lim, Cambridge Companions to Religion (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 84.

<sup>4</sup> See Giffen, "'Let No Man Know': Negotiating the Gendered Discourse of Affliction in Anne Bradstreet's 'Here Follows Some Verses Upon the Burning of Our House, July 10th, 1666,'" *Legacy* 27, no. 1 (2010): 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Hilliker, "Engendering Identity: The Discourse of Familial Education in Anne Bradstreet and Marie De L'Incarnation," *Early American Literature* 42, no. 3 (November 2007): 440. Tamara Harvey also situates Bradstreet as a uniting force present in both British and

have increasingly drawn attention to this fact, Bradstreet and her Puritan contemporaries continue to experience marginalization and misrepresentation in general historiography. Bradstreet was one of many women writers who identified with the Puritan movement at various stages. If scholarship were to examine these writers and their development, much might be learned about Puritan culture and letters. How did female writers explore various emphases on duty and grace? Did Puritan women writers' perspectives change on literature for devotional purposes during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? With which theological or political concepts in Puritan thought did women writers identify, and how do these priorities compare to those of their male counterparts?

This study only begins to explore Bradstreet's answers to these questions. Puritan women writers offer wonderful opportunities for expanding scholarship of Puritan culture, literature, and communities. Although Bradstreet is perhaps the best known female voice of Puritanism, she is rarely examined in the context of other Puritan writers of either sex except for a select few such as John Winthrop and Thomas Dudley. She is routinely isolated, "the lone woman poet on the American frontier" producing decent, if unoriginal verse.<sup>6</sup> Literary and historical scholars alike position Bradstreet within an unsupportive atmosphere either of repression or disinterest. While her literary skill may set her apart from her contemporaries, stylistic superiority is hardly an argument for historiographical isolation.

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American literary traditions. Harvey, "'Now Sisters... Impart Your Usefulness, and Force': Anne Bradstreet's Feminist Functionalism in *The Tenth Muse* (1650)," *Early American Literature* 35, no. 1 (2000): 6. See also Giffen, "'Let No Man Know'," 7, 4n; "Anne Bradstreet (1612-1672): Poems and Prose (c. 1635-1670)," in *The Puritans in America: A Narrative Anthology*, ed. Andrew Delbanco and Alan Heimert (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 130-1.

<sup>6</sup> Hilliker, "Engendering Identity," 436.

Feminist scholarship, of course, continues to uncover and historicize such authors, but mainstream history of Puritanism as a whole has interacted very little with the broadening array of texts by Puritan women. As Erica Longfellow has argued, to fully understand the scope of women's writing in the early modern West is "a project that is not possible without historical detail, even more historical detail than we have yet uncovered."<sup>7</sup> Historians must move beyond stereotypes. Much could be learned from Bradstreet's theologically grounded aesthetics, which, like Lucy Hutchinson's works, open up possibilities for understanding a comprehensive view of literary culture and its place in the Puritan community. George Marsden, for example, in his biography of Johnathan Edwards might have employed Bradstreet's text as a valuable example of the Elizabethan literary heritage of Edwards' forebears. However, Marsden references Bradstreet only once as a case study for women's "spiritual power through...submission" in connection with Mary Rowlandson despite the disparity in education, social status, style, genre, and content between these two writers.<sup>8</sup> Broader history of Puritanism has also suffered from this neglect. Francis Bremer, widely recognized as one of modern scholarship's leading historians of Puritanism, has built on the work of Patrick Collinson and others to explore rich religious networks among Puritan laity through testimony and conferences. Francis Bremer discusses a variety of Puritan women writers and spiritual leaders in a significant step towards recognizing their presence.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, Bremer confines authors such as Anne Fenwick and Anna Trapnell within this section on female participation rather than referencing them alongside their male

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<sup>7</sup> Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 17.

<sup>8</sup> George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 249.

<sup>9</sup> See Bremer, "Chapter 3: Lay Puritans in Stuart England" in *Lay Empowerment and the Development of Puritanism* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire (GB): Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 39-42.

counterparts.<sup>10</sup> In practice although not in theory, women writers are still isolated from mainstream literature on Puritan culture.

Wendy Martin, showcasing this isolated approach, has argued that Bradstreet's significance lies in her rebellion against Puritan constraints. Bradstreet avoided "acceptable" topics such as "providential history," "the exemplary lives of the saints," or the "communal destiny of the Puritan tribe" and instead risked her reputation to write on forbidden subjects such as misogyny.<sup>11</sup> Such statements cripple Bradstreet's voice. Rather than allowing her to speak from an authentic cultural context, Martin assumes a simplified stereotype of harshly controlled Puritan society bent on suppressing any spark of individuality in its adherents. Presupposing the necessity of anguished conflict between Bradstreet's religious devotion and her genetics, scholarship of this sort leaves no room for contextual criticism. Instead, Bradstreet's texts must be read ironically. A straightforward reading, informed by historical context, is never the correct one. When she pleads for peace in Cromwell's England, Bradstreet is merely parroting her father's political arguments. When she anticipates heaven's release from illness, she is mindlessly reciting Calvinist truisms. However, the very presence of Bradstreet, a widely respected upper-class woman writing and circulating poetry from a place of political influence, contradicts such an assumption about a culture that welcomed and admired her.

Further, the argument that Bradstreet, "[b]y determining her own priorities, ... risked being branded as a heretic" ignores not only extant responses to her work, but the work itself.<sup>12</sup> When Bradstreet's writing is placed in historical context, she provides fascinating insight into the

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 40-1.

<sup>11</sup> Wendy Martin, "Anne Bradstreet's Poetry: A Study of Subversive Piety," in *Shakespeare's Sisters: Feminist Essays on Women Poets*, ed. Sandra M. Gilbert and Susan Gubar (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1979), 28.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 28.



Puritan movement. Her early love for literature corresponds to her passionate commitment to Puritan theology, demonstrating that education and creativity could have distinctly Puritan motivations for laywomen as well as laymen. Her involvement in politics is unique in its simultaneous call for uncompromising moral reform and its political moderation. Here, again, Bradstreet employs Puritan theology to support the idea that governmental dysfunction is not only unavoidable, but part of God's sovereign plan; however, knowledge of God's sovereignty empowers her to encourage fellow Puritans towards reconciliation. Like her contemporaries, Bradstreet applies this same concept to practical theology. Puritans can face the hardships of New England—political instability, disease, loss of loved ones—in the confidence that God is present with them. He will repay their suffering with peace and comfort. He will also reunite them with the loved ones they have lost. Bradstreet's ability to write stems from this relationship with God. He empowers her narrative as one of triumph, rather than defeat.

Recognizing this narrative of triumph among female Puritans, scholars such as Amanda Porterfield have highlighted the “exemplarity” of women like Bradstreet. According to Porterfield, Puritan women used exemplary, godly living to exercise spiritual authority over their families and neighbors, thus subverting patriarchal categories.<sup>13</sup> Porterfield's scholarship draws attention to the unstated power of women in Puritan circles. This acknowledgement approaches a holistic understanding of the movement. However, it is possible that labels of exemplarity have reinforced the very categories they deplore. In many scholarly circles, their gender continues to mark Puritan women writers as alternative while historians rely chiefly on male Puritan writers to identify theological and cultural patterns. It seems hardly necessary to observe that we cannot

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<sup>13</sup> Porterfield, *Female Piety in Puritan New England : The Emergence of Religious Humanism*, Religion in America (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 90-2.

expect Puritan women to have seen everything through a gendered lens, that they too might have voluntarily participated in Puritanism as fully functioning, rational creatures. Despite this, historiography of their texts consistently identifies them as the “other,” either “exemplary” or “subversive.” This has deprived us of valuable primary sources and dangerously oversimplified an influential period of western thought.

In attempting to remedy this neglect, historians need not pretend that even notable Puritan women like Bradstreet attained the popularity and influence of William Perkins or John Cotton. Because women writers were less common and less widely read than men in Puritan communities, a fifty-fifty balance of primary sources based on gender would of course be inaccurate. This is especially clear in light of the significant pressures and limitations placed upon women in Puritan circles where misogyny often stemmed from a blend of religious ideology and cultural norms. The effect of such limitations on historical texts by and about women in seventeenth-century England and New England cannot be overestimated. Nor did Bradstreet deny this. In her sardonic reference to “each carping tongue” who suggested that she return to sewing, she forestalled inevitable criticism.<sup>14</sup> The carping tongues have not quieted today even where Bradstreet’s beliefs are revered.

But misogyny does not seem to have stopped Bradstreet from writing or dismissed the threat of unauthorized London printers publishing her work.<sup>15</sup> Nor did it stop the mouth of Cotton Mather who with characteristic enthusiasm demanded for Bradstreet a pedestal among the

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<sup>14</sup> Bradstreet, “The Prologue,” in *The Tenth Muse Lately Sprung up in America or Severall Poems, Compiled with Great Variety of Wit and Learning, Full of Delight*. (London: Printed for Stephen Bowtell at the Sign of the Bible in Popes Head-Alley, 1650), line 5.1.

<sup>15</sup> See Thickstun, “Contextualizing Anne Bradstreet’s Literary Remains: Why We Need a New Edition of the Poems,” *Early American Literature* 52, no. 2 (2017): 410-1.

“Learned Women” of the ages.<sup>16</sup> The literary merit and “educational worth” of *The Tenth Muse* would be applauded during Bradstreet’s lifetime by no less than Bathusa Pell-Makin, a leading tutor in the family of King Charles I.<sup>17</sup> A highly respected minister, Edward Taylor penned meditative poetry that continued and expanded on the New England Puritan tradition. *The Tenth Muse*, says Alice Henton, was the “only...book of poetry” in Taylor’s library.<sup>18</sup> Bradstreet continued to write and to be read even during childbirth and illness that could have excused an honorable retreat from public, male scrutiny. Did she enjoy writing? Judging from the memoirs, meditations, journal entries, and more than fifty poems she left behind, it would appear that she did.

Bradstreet’s transitions between manuscript and print confirm that she intended her poetry for multiple audiences. Manuscript circulation of *The Tenth Muse* had earned her fame as a poet before its print publication in London was loudly applauded by male readers.<sup>19</sup> While

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<sup>16</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, ed. Kenneth B. Murdock and Elizabeth W. Miller, Book II: Ecclesiarum Clypei (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1977), 233.

<sup>17</sup> Citing *The Tenth Muse*’s didactic qualities and Bradstreet’s education, Elizabeth Ferszt has suggested that Bradstreet’s texts could have been intended as educational resources and might have been used in dames schools in New England. Her thesis admits the lack of “direct evidence” (305), but draws attention to educational language within the quaternions that has often been overlooked in the general avoidance of Bradstreet’s early poetry. See Ferszt, “Transatlantic Dame School: The Early Poems of Anne Bradstreet as Pedagogy,” *Women’s Studies* 43, no. 3 (April 2014): 305, 308-9; see also Hensley, “Anne Bradstreet’s Wreath of Thyme,” introduction to *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, by Anne Bradstreet, ed. Jeannine Hensley (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1967), xxxiii, 10n.

<sup>18</sup> This fact alone suggests that Bradstreet’s early poetry was not wholly irrelevant to New England Puritan culture. Relocation to a new continent did not necessarily require the literate, literary Puritan to divorce herself from English scholarship and arts. On Taylor’s library, see Henton, “Once Masculines... Now Feminines Awhile’: Gendered Imagery and the Significance of Anne Bradstreet’s ‘The Tenth Muse,’” *The New England Quarterly* 85, no. 2 (June 2012): 319.

<sup>19</sup> See Nathaniel Ward, “Mercury shew’d Apollo, Bartas Book,” in *The Tenth Muse*, n.p.; John Woodbridge, “To my deare Sister, the author of these Poems,” in *The Tenth Muse*, n.p.; C.B., “Upon the Author,” in *the Tenth Muse*, n.p.

Bradstreet avoided print as an invitation for unscrupulous criticism, she seems to have added elegies on her parents and commentary on “The Four Monarchies” to *Several Poems*, intending them expressly for readers of print. Even the autobiography, meditations, and personal narratives of the Andover Manuscript are addressed to her family; in keeping with manuscript culture of the time period, Bradstreet could have reasonably expected her children to offer this “book” to others for spiritual advice and family history. She does not seem to have considered this abnormal activity. Nor was it abnormal, given the memoirs, commonplace books, poetry, and even theological writings that fellow Puritans of both sexes have left behind.

Where Puritan women writers overlap with or reference or reverence their male contemporaries, this is hardly surprising given their shared theology, history, and culture. Do such references negate the act of writing, which has been recognized for centuries as the author’s speaking voice, however ignorant or feeble?<sup>20</sup> How much more actively did these women write who treasured scriptural texts as the word of God, who believed that reading and analyzing those texts was a sacred task, who spent hours each week listening to and discussing lectures that were essentially literary analyses? This is in no way meant to dismiss the constraints of Puritan thought, but simply to suggest that, in a culture devoted to literature from deep personal convictions, it is not very surprising to find many women and men creating literature.

In their ground-breaking introduction to *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558-1680*, Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann observe that writing came naturally to

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<sup>20</sup> Inferiority of content or style might justify the exclusion of women authors from strictly literary analysis, but only if enough attention had been paid to the texts to establish such a claim. Historiography, however, can rely on no such defense. Should “exemplary” identification with a specific religion and culture automatically disqualify a text as historically relevant based on the author’s gender? Surely the contextual scrutiny that has been rigorously applied to Michael Wigglesworth, William Perkins, John Winthrop, or Edward Taylor can be applied also to their female contemporaries.

the Puritan woman because “each woman’s distinctive puritanism was an overt influence upon her intellectual development and active cultural engagement, rather than passively inflected because of this engagement.”<sup>21</sup> Theology empowered the Puritan’s understanding of the world as broken, but also beautiful. Because God was a personal, compassionate being, their personal stories—and the greater story of history—were full of divine purpose. Writing, then, was an almost sacred act for Anne Bradstreet, as well as for Elizabeth Major, Hannah Allen, Anne Fenwick, Lady Brilliana Harley, Lady Mary Carey, Elizabeth Jocelin, Mary Rowlandson, Lucy Hutchinson, Lady Grace Mildmay, Lady Elizabeth Clinton, and many others. The implications of this writing-as-action only surface when Bradstreet’s cultural context is understood. Bradstreet centered her writings within the framework of Puritan theology. The favorable stance of her contemporaries towards her work and the sheer number of Puritan women writers during the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries eliminate the need to interpret her words in isolation or to prioritize subtext. Scholars can confirm that Bradstreet meant what she wrote.

Revisiting these texts as reflections of Bradstreet’s authentic voice demystifies her involvement in public *and* private categories of thought. In turn, a heightened understanding of Bradstreet’s public poetry in the context of a largely positive religious and literary culture enables clarity on her more personal texts. As Puritanism empowered her commentary on social and academic issues, so also it enabled her to claim her personal experiences as challenges to explore God’s grace. This opens to us new possibilities for understanding Puritanism—and, by extension, of other value systems and other cultures—as birthplaces of thought and expression that have in turn interacted with politics and economics and medicine. Bradstreet’s

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<sup>21</sup> Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, "Introduction," in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558-1680*, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann (Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 7.

autobiographical work also reveals writing as an authoritative spiritual act for women as well as men. When Bradstreet and her contemporaries are granted historical presence, they reveal agency and artistry among women writers who have confidently spoken to cultures very different from our own and have been heard.

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