INFORMATION TO USERS

This reproduction was made from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technology has been used to photograph and reproduce this document, the quality of the reproduction is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help clarify markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure complete continuity.

2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark, it is an indication of either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, duplicate copy, or copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed. For blurred pages, a good image of the page can be found in the adjacent frame. If copyrighted materials were deleted, a target note will appear listing the pages in the adjacent frame.

3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed, a definite method of "sectioning" the material has been followed. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.

4. For illustrations that cannot be satisfactorily reproduced by xerographic means, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and inserted into your xerographic copy. These prints are available upon request from the Dissertations Customer Services Department.

5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases the best available copy has been filmed.
Garcia-Rouphail, Maria

ANNE BRADSTREET, HER POETRY, AND THE POLICIES OF EXCLUSION:
A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPING SENSE OF POETIC PURPOSE

The Ohio State University

University Microfilms International 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

Copyright 1982

by

Garcia-Rouphail, Maria

All Rights Reserved
ANNE BRADSTREET, HER POETRY, AND THE POLICIES OF EXCLUSION:
A STUDY OF THE DEVELOPING SENSE OF POETIC PURPOSE

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By
Maria Garcia-Rouphail, B.A., M.A.

********

The Ohio State University
1982

Reading Committee:
Robert Jones
Mildred Munday
Barbara Rigney

Approved By

Adviser
Department of English
for my father
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to the following people: to Professors Robert Jones, Mildred Munday, and Barbara Rigney for their generosity and encouragement, as well as for their sound professional guidance; to my dear husband, Nagui Rouphail, for his unwavering support and patience; to my sister, Margarita Garcia, for her encouragement; to my friends, Joan Samuelson and Maura Taaffe, for "being there"; and to my father, Roberto Garcia-Gallo, who taught us to love knowledge and justice.
VITA

September 1, 1948 .......... Born - Bronx, New York
1970 ......................... B.A., Barry College, Miami Shores, Florida
1970-1976 .................... Teacher, Dade County Public Schools, Miami, Florida
1974 ......................... M.A., Florida State University, Tallahassee, Florida
1976-81 ...................... Teaching Associate, Department of English, The Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio

FIELDS OF STUDY

Major Field: American Literature to 1900

Renaissance and Seventeenth-Century Poetry, Prose, Drama
Restoration and Eighteenth Century Literature
Victorian and Modern Novel
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ................................................................. iii
VITA ........................................................................................ iv
INTRODUCTION ................................................................. 1

Chapter

I. Anne Bradstreet and the Readers: A Survey of Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Historical and Critical Attitudes ... 27

II. Gender and Creativity in Seventeenth Century Poetry: Anne Bradstreet's Poetry of Public Voice ................................. 54

III. City of God, City of Man: Bradstreet's "Histories" and the Puritan Errand ................................................................. 85

IV. The "Puritanization" of Anne Bradstreet: The Shift to the Private Voice ................................................................. 117

V. "Puritanization" Continued: Poetry as Piety ............................................ 157

CONCLUSION ........................................................................ 193
APPENDIX ............................................................................. 203
BIBLIOGRAPHY ................................................................... 205
INTRODUCTION

The modern reader of the poetry and prose of Puritan New England in the early seventeenth century typically marvels at the public character of such works. As Earl Miner has observed, public verse --and we may add, public prose--"testifies to a shared world in which words and actions . . . are harmonious in a real world validated by the experience of many minds." In addressing the community at large, the writer "speaks in many social tones of approbation or censure"; he (or she, as the case infrequently was) aimed at defining communal values and encouraging their realization in the structure and behavior of society, as well as condemning intransigence. At any point in Puritan New England between 1630 (when middle-class English Calvinists planted a colony at Massachusetts Bay) and 1672 (the year in which Anne Bradstreet died), one may hear the reasoned voices of the civil authorities and the fortissimo thunderings of the ministers hammering out a consistent vision of the nature and purpose of the community.

The poetry of Anne Bradstreet, however, rarely exhibits these features. With the exception of "A Dialogue Between Old England and New" (composed in the early forties) and a fleeting reference to "God's people" in a later poem, Bradstreet's verse is preponderantly private in subject matter and tone, celebrating the circumstances and events of her domestic life. This fact is significant in view of the apparent forcefulness with
which the public millennial myth of the New Jerusalem was promulgated in
New England, and it raises a number of questions concerning the condition
of women's participation in the social and intellectual life of the
colony and Bradstreet's sense of her place and purpose as a poet. The
fact that no other woman is on record as having written verse during the
first stages of colonization attests to the originality of her efforts.

Something impelled Bradstreet to write; but why did she not write more
fully and explicitly about the errand when she was in fact living the
experiment in all of its daily harshness and uncertainty? Why does she
revert, especially after roughly 1650, to the events of her private life
for the material of verse? What did she think she was accomplishing by
writing verse? At work in an age that assigned a place and a function to
every being, Bradstreet clearly thought that she had a purpose to fulfill
in writing poetry of a public voice between 1638-49, and private verse
exclusively after 1650. Did her function as a daughter, a wife, and a
mother—which she understood and accepted as essential features of her
gender and Christian vocation—shape her point of view in the poems; and
if so, to what qualitative effect? These questions need to be more assidu­
ously addressed than they have been heretofore, especially if we are to
enlarge our understanding of the kinds of issues American women have faced
as artists, and if ultimately we are to obtain a more finely tuned picture
of Puritan culture. This dissertation assumes as its aim to answer these
questions. Tracing Bradstreet's progress chronologically, it describes
her developing sense of poetic purpose from approximately the late 1630's,
until the end of the 1660's, the period in which she wrote virtually all of
her verse and prose. The dissertation draws extensively from Bradstreet's
verse and her journals, as well as from the sermons, tracts, and poetry of her contemporaries—all in an effort to present Bradstreet's achievement in its historical, social, and literary contexts.

In order to visualize Bradstreet's divergence from the New England writers of the period, it is necessary to understand the purpose that Puritans assigned to their efforts at colonization. It is also important to note that this purpose was persistently reiterated in the writings of magistrates, preachers, and poets—all of whom addressed themselves to a public audience. In 1630, while the people were yet aboard the Arbella, John Winthrop sought to remind them of their divine mission:

... for the work wee haue in hand, it is by a mutuall consent through a speciall overruleing providence, and a more then an ordinary approbation of the Churches of Christ to seeke out a place of Cohabitation and Consorte-shipp under a due forme of Government both civil and ecclesiasticall. In such cases as this are the care of the publique must oversway all private respects, by which not onely conscience, but meare Ciuill pollicy doth binde vs; for it is a true rule that particular estates cannot subsist in the ruine of the publique.4

Winthrop saw the settlers as a coalition of the righteous whose foremost goal was to establish a new and godly society upon the foundations of a purified Christianity, and supported by the force of civil law. The joint notions of newness and godliness seem critical to Winthrop's vision, as do the elements of danger and struggle and the idea that the fate of the Christian world hangs in the balance:

... we shall finde that the God of Israel is among vs, when tenn of vs shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies, when hee shall make vs a prayes and glory, that men shall say of succeeding plantacions: the lord make it like that of New England: for we must Consider that wee shall be as a Citty ypon a Hill, the eies of all people are vpon us... . 5
Likewise, John Cotton, first among the elite group of Puritan preachers in New England, asserted the divine plan behind the English migration to the wilderness. Applying to the settlers the biblical typology of the ancient Israelites, Cotton in effect invested this specific event of English colonialism with an historical and eschatological rationale. God intended the new land to belong to these latter-day chosen people for the purpose of bringing about his kingdom on earth; and they might obtain the land by either peaceful or belligerent means (the latter Cotton refers to as "lawful warre with the inhabitants" by which God "casts out the enemies" of his people).

Such attitudes expressed at the inception of the Puritan "errand into the wilderness" persist in the 1640's and 50's in the lengthy mytho-history, Wonder-Working Providence, written by one Edward Johnson, town clerk of Woburn in Massachusetts and eye-witness to most of the events he records in the book. Johnson's testimony is important as an indication of how the public ideology of a divine mission affected the understanding and resolve of the "rank and file." Johnson demonstrates a thorough absorption into the millennial framework of the ideology; writing at a time of change in the colony, Johnson is not merely an historian of events but an advocate of the eschatological purpose set forth decades before in the early writings and sermons of the patriarchs. As the inspiration for his historiography, Johnson's unshakable faith in the colonial effort transforms his narrative into epic, complete with deus ex machina and heroic deeds. Indeed, Wonder-Working Providence is a kind of hagiography in which for the most part living Puritan saints are enshrined as members of the church militant, struggling in the midst of
all to bring about the New Jerusalem. In Wonder-Working Providence, we sense Johnson's dependence upon the sermon for the conceptual and rhetorical use he makes of scriptural material; but his use of such material is far from ornamental. For Johnson is absolutely convinced of the Puritan "Commission . . . to enter upon a Blessed Reformation" by converting the unregenerate wilderness into a Christian garden, and the evidence of God's design for such a project Johnson discovers in the steady proliferation of towns and in the increasing prosperity of the saints brought about by agricultural and mercantile enterprise. In all of this material profusion, Johnson is constantly aware of the efforts of the unnamed many who as "poore sheepe" followed the ministers and other patriarchs into the wilderness.

Finally, we may turn to the Reverend Michael Wigglesworth as still another exemplar of the public voice. He is perhaps most remembered as an uncompromising and strident dogmatist whose agonizing obsession with his own sexual impulses and hygiene kept his inner life under a constant state of siege and produced a notorious harshness toward his associates. Still, his poems of 1662, "God's Controversy with New England" and "The Day of Doom" apparently touched public sentiment, for they proved very popular despite (or very likely because of) their strongly censorious tone. Designed to make a reader weep nostalgically for the vigorous piety and communal spirit in the early days of settlement, and to decry the materialism and slackness of the present, "God's Controversy with New England" stands as one of the foremost jeremiads, albeit in verse, of the sixties. The point to note here is its reiteration of the full dramatic panoply of the millennial myth, which Wigglesworth feels is threatened by self-interest
and materialism. Assuming the persona of Christ (as does Johnson in the first chapter of Wonder-Working Providence), Wigglesworth demands to know:

Are these the men that prized libertee
To walk with God according to their light,
To be as good as he would have them bee,
To serve and worship him with all their might,
Before the pleasures which a fruitfull field,
And country flowing-full of all good things, could yield?

Are these the folk whom from the brittish Iles,
Through the stern billows of the watry main,
I safely led so many thousand miles,
As if their journey had been through a plain?
Whom having from all enemies protected,
And through so many deaths and dangers well directed?

I brought and planted on the western shore,
Where nought but bruits and salvage wights did swarm
(Untaught, untrain'd, untam'd by vertue's lore)
That sought their blood, yet could not do them harm?
My fury's faile them threst, my fatal broom
Did sweep them hence, to make my people Elbow-room.

Is this the people . . .
For whose dear sake an howling wilderness 13
I largely turned into a fruitfull paradise?

Christ discovers his anointed people to have become grievous "Backsliders" whom he must now severely punish in order to reduce them—that is, lead them back—to the embrace of their birthright, the commission for a Reformation. (Thus does Wigglesworth account for the drought of 1662, which apparently was the immediate occasion for the poem.) Wigglesworth suggests that the sins of individuals have a dangerous cumulative effect, aggregating, as it were, into a pool to pollute the entire community. Moral pollution ultimately threatens to thwart God's plan of reformation; once again, man finds himself at a crisis point, and his wilful pride and perversity threaten to foul the beauty and innocence in God's newest garden and commonwealth, New England.
The idea of colonial settlement as a geopolitical struggle against the Antichrist (collectively: Satan, the Pope, the Catholic and Anglican churches, all heretics, the Indians, and the Stuart monarchs with their lackeys) formed an integral part of the New England Puritan self-image: it provided the first generation of settlers with purpose and cohesion, as well as an important emotional counterbalance to homesickness and fear. The Puritan settlers considered that they received their patent virtually from God himself, a conviction based in a typological exegesis of scripture that closely identified them with the ancient Israelites: the election, enslavement, wandering, and liberation of the Jews were seen as prefiguring the Puritan election, ordeal, transplantation, errand. Yet Puritans did not feel that they were simply repeating an historical pattern; instead they saw themselves positioned at the most significant point in the linear progression of history—the omega point of fulfillment of all of the foregoing promises of redemption and peace. The fruit of Christ's redemptive act would be the restoration of the wholesome body of his church, a process of purification (from Romish taints) and reconciliation (of ecclesiastical and civil authority in a theocracy). All of preceding history inclined toward this particular time and space, and Puritans felt themselves to be living at the center of it all. The acquisition of land by any means necessary was an easily justified extension of the reasons that prompted the settlers to leave England to begin with, and the Puritans were quite adept at dressing their rationale in the resplendent language of scripture and law:

This placing of people in this or that Country, is from God's sovereignty over all the earth, and the inhabitants thereof. . . . Therefore it is meete he should provide a place for all Nations to inhabite, and have all the earth
replenished. Only in the Text here is meant some more speciall appointment, because God tells them it by his owme mouth; . . . that is, He gives them the land by promise; others take the land by his providence, but God's people take the land by promise . . . which they discerne, first by discerning themselves to be in Christ . . . 14

The Puritans, therefore, felt not so much that they were taking the land, as they were moving onto property that was already their own.

All of the attitudes and assumptions that have been mentioned so far--the conviction of a divine mission, the sense of its momentous historical and sacred importance, the feelings of militant determination, of danger and urgency--blended with the imagery of mankind's original innocence in Paradise and subsequent exile in the wilderness to create a public millennial myth in which the community closes the gap between sacred and secular history; nationalism is grafted onto soteriology. At the same time, the myth contained an crucial proviso by which the mission's success depended upon the unstinting efforts of each individual. The moral health of the community depended upon that of its individual members. The ministers and civil authorities must be ever vigilant over the moral state of the community, censuring the group and/or individuals as the need should arise; all individuals must keep watch over their own souls to ascertain that God's saving grace is present and at work. The myth of the errand, with its Adamic and millennial cast, formed the centerpiece of the Puritan ethos and gave rise to a particular kind of public verse in which the myth figured explicitly as a theme (such as in "God's Controversy with New England") or was implied (as in the elegies celebrating the lives of the patriarchs which Johnson intersperses liberally throughout Wonder-Working Providence). Thus, the poetry of
Puritan New England is, as Roy Harvey Pearce has observed, the "poetry of dogma and history." 15

Against this background of public myth and public verse, the poetry of Anne Bradstreet stands in marked contrast. As we have noted, only in two poems does she allude specifically to the Puritan mission. In "Upon my dear and loving husband his going into England," dated January 16, 1661, Bradstreet's prayer for the success and safety of Simon's trip includes a reference to its significance for the colony. Sandwiched between pleas for his welfare is an earnest plea for the community:

Remember Lord thy folk whom thou
To wilderness has't brought
Let not thine own inheritance
Bee sold away for Novght. 16

In "A Dialogue between Old England and New," which Bradstreet composed in 1642, the myth of the errand figures more or less implicitly in the counsel that "New England" tenders to her "mother," then devastated by the war between the king and Parliament. "Old England" must accept the present strife as a means of her purification in a reformed Christianity (in which ecclesiastical and civil authorities would cooperate to form a glorious new English commonwealth). The inclusion of Old England in the irenic outcome of history was integral to the notion of "errand" itself, for the New England Puritans in the first generation of settlement always considered themselves to be English men and women who were chosen to work in behalf of the entire nation. Cotton had admonished the little band of believers who gathered on the eve of their voyage to remember "our Jerusalem at home, and to "forget not the wombe that bare you, and the breasts that gave you sucke." Bradstreet herself was very likely moved to write "A Dialogue" as a result of William Hooke's sermon, "New England's Tears," which he
delivered on July 23, 1640—a day set aside for "public humiliation" in behalf of their suffering countrymen overseas. Said Hooke:

There is not land that claimes our name but Englande, wee are distinguished from all the nations in the world by the name of English. . . . Brethren! Did we not there draw our first breath? Did not the Sunne first shine there upon our heads? Did not that land first beare us, even that pleasant Island, but for sin, I would say, that Garden of the Lord, that Paradise? . . . You know that God hath hitherto made that land a blessing unto this; If Christ hath a Vine here, that land hath as yet been the Elme that hath susteined it. Thence hath the Lord thus stockt this American part with such Worthies, there were they bred and nurst . . . .

Stephen Marshall's "Meroz Cursed," a fast-day sermon preached before the House of Commons on February 23, 1641, and published shortly thereafter, also very likely inspired portions of Bradstreet's "A Dialogue." His message was for the necessity and timeliness of armed violence in overthrowing the ungodly tyranny of the Stuart monarch; hence his violent imprecation upon all quibblers and fence-straddlers. Bradstreet defends Parliament's war against Charles I, and like Marshall, invokes "Mero's curse" upon all those who fail to support the cause "with prayers, arms, and purse."

But "Upon my . . . husband" and "A Dialogue between Old England and New" offer the only instances in which the myth of the errand makes an appearance. The overwhelming bulk of Bradstreet's verse is private, expressive of her individual spiritual struggles and prompted by specific events in her domestic life, without reference to the public debate that raged around her. If we intend to assert at the outset that being a woman in seventeenth century Puritan New England exerted a powerful formative influence upon Bradstreet's poetic sensibilities, then we are bound take into account for more than just her poetry. We must consider the social
assumptions and historical events that had a direct impact upon women in her community, as well as the specific relationships and events in the poet's life that excited her to record them in verse and in prose journals. The latter especially provide much information about her ongoing spiritual and intellectual concerns, and they help to assign chronological positions to the undated poems, thus contributing to the larger picture of her sense of a womanly and poetic purpose. Finally, we must look at what Bradstreet had to say about writing and we must look at the poems themselves.

What we discover after pursuing all of these inquiries is first a clear pattern of contradictory social assumptions that had the net effect of excluding women from public participation in the intellectual and political life of the community. The Puritan emphasis upon individual accountability bestowed upon women a spiritual parity with men; the doctrines of individual election and reprobation forced both men and women to look to their own souls for signs of their justification in faith. From there they were expected to demonstrate their election by carrying out the obligations of their individual vocations, thus working in concert to bring about the New Jerusalem. But spiritual parity was not to be mistaken for intellectual or moral parity: despite their redemption by Christ, women remained inferior to men. For example, barring serious illness, a wife's failure to attend a public prayer meeting (where she was relegated to the back of the room and enjoined to silence) constituted a civil offense for which her husband was publicly reprimanded. The issue at stake was not so much the woman's failure to keep holy the sabbath as it was the man's failure to rule his wife. This deference to womanly
weakness contained an inherent cynicism which implied a woman's incapacity to exercise her own will with a beneficial result. Such a view, especially as it applied to other aspects of Puritan life (a woman's choice of a spouse, her exercise of authority over children and servants, her disposition of household goods), effectively eviscerated the notion of a spiritual equality: a being whose will power is seriously questioned and in need of restraint could hardly feel confident of possessing saving grace. It may be argued here that predestinarian theology questioned the free will of all beings; yet womanly weakness was exactly that—an assumption of weakness based upon a consideration of gender. It is no wonder that in the 1630's, when the colony was gripped by religious fervor that spilled over into "heresy," women were most attracted to the antinomian position that an individual was saved in an immediate revelation from God, and it is significant that this position was put forward by a woman, Anne Hutchinson. Further, the additional freight imposed upon a husband increased his own spiritual liability, and it had the effect of calling his manhood in question when he could not manage his wife—a situation that most assuredly did not promote domestic tranquility. In short, women themselves were a liability: first, to their own and their husbands' salvation, and then in the larger view, to the errand itself, for they had the potential to undermine the legal authority that God had invested in men alone to govern the microcosmic commonwealth of the family and the macrocosmic commonwealth of the state. (This was presumed true in the case of Anne Hutchinson who was accused of infusing her poisonous doctrine into the healthy body of the colony after she had stolen past the theoretically fail-safe checkpoint of her husband's veto. Actually, she was thought to have worked her charms upon her uxorious and "effeminate" spouse, thus
neutralizing his defenses against her wilfullness),

Compounding the issue of women's moral constitution was the
dichotomous view of human nature wherein the various faculties were
24
separated in active and passive and described in terms of their being
masculine and feminine. With fortification from biblical prescriptions
of gender roles, this conceptual habit contributed to the strict division
of labor between the sexes. One's duty--taken in the grand sense of
vocation and in the lesser sense of mundane work--was determined by one's
gender, as Robert Bolton observed in 1632:

The duty of the husband is to travel abroad, to seek a
living; and the wives duty is to keepe the house. The
duty of the husband is to get money and provision: and
the wives, not vainely to spend it. The duty of the
husband is to deal with many men; and of the wife, to
talke with a few. The duty of the husband is, to be
intermeddling: and of the wife, to be solitarie and
withdrawne.25

Clearly, these notions were not unique to Puritanism, but Puritans on both
sides of the Atlantic pursued them with a particular fervor. No other
group produced as many tracts on the relationship between husband and wife, and parents and children, as did the Puritans. In drawing such stark
distinctions between gender roles, Bolton was succinctly repeating the
doctrines elucidated earlier by such worthies as Robert Pricke (The Doc-
trine of Superioritie and of Subjection, 1609), John Dodd and Robert Cleaver
(A Godlye Form of Household Government, 1614), and William Gouge
(Of Domesticall Duties, 1622). Concomitant with the division of roles along
gender lines was the insistence upon a godly appearance and deportment.
For women this meant a silent and submissive demeanor; and for both sexes,
a strict taboo against transvestism. A woman's skirts argued a perpetual
confinement to a small circumference of space and her withdrawal from the
intellectual, political, and commercial mainstream. As Cotton Mather's remarks indicate, Bradstreet herself would have been remembered as merely an appendage to her father, Thomas Dudley, had not her poetry granted her some notoriety of her own.

Motherhood, considered as a woman's chief purpose, provided the only context in which Anne Bradstreet could express without censure the "feminine" traits of tenderness and affection. In all other relationships a woman was expected to place God before creatures and to defer to her betters; yet, in nurturing small children, she was permitted the full intensity of her emotions, whereas the father was expected to maintain a lordly distance and gravity so as to keep both children and mother in line. Hence, the emotions were properly the province of women and were acceptable within the maternal context, but they also carried a covert threat of the subversion of social order, which it was the father's task to maintain. For in loving their children to excess, mothers were inclined "to prank up their children above their husbands place and calling." The Puritans' fear of being unmanned by their wives and children suggests a male rejection of the emotions. Puritans did equate feeling and weakness with femininity, and as Thomas Hooker opined, these characteristics rendered women particularly unsuited to public participation in the spiritual life of the community:

... because we find it by experience, the feebleness of some, their shamefaced modesty and melancholick fearfulness is such, that they are not able to expresse themselves in the face of a Congregation.

Yet, as David Leverenz has astutely observed in his investigations into the "language of Puritan feeling," hostility to the emotions was more precisely an ambivalence. "Religion is especially seated in the
affections," said Richard Sibbes (The Riches of Mercie, 1638); the conversion from a life of reprobation to one of faith required an experience of the horror of sin, the dread of damnation, the desolation of divorce from God—all of which culminated in a sweet influx of assurance of election, followed by wrenching self-doubt. In short, the Puritan notion of the individual covenant of faith included at its very core the assumption that the emotions rendered a flinty heart soft and pliable. Hence, "some sense of receptive feminine virtue was ... crucial to being prepared for conversion."

The notion of a passive soul produced an abundance of female and child imagery both in the sermons and tracts of the ministers and in their private journals to describe variously their experience of faith, their relationship to Christ, the church's relationship to Christ, and the role of the minister in the theocratic community of New England. The source for much of this imagery was the Canticle of Canticles, and Puritans contributed enormously to the exegesis of this biblical work. Gouge in his An Exposition of the Song of Solomon: Called Canticles (1615) described "the blessed and sweet conjunction between Christ and his Church and of the contrait and espousels made betweene them whilst the Church is now militant upon Earth." The parousia, he said, would occasion the "solemnity of the marriage." In a more direct reference to female passivity and fecundity, Cotton in his A Brief Exposition of the Whole Book of Canticles, or Song of Solomon (1642) declared that Solomon's marriage to the Egyptian princess was a "type of Christ, admitting the Gentiles into the fellowship of his marriage-bed." The church, Cotton said, has two breasts "out of which we that are the children of the church, suck the pure
milke of the word of God." These breasts are the ministers themselves, and the "sincere milke of the word" are the Old and New Testaments. Edward Taylor desired the church to "put these nibbles then my mouth into/And suckle me therewith I humbly pray,/Then with this milk my Spirituall 42Babe I'ist grow." Thus, female submissiveness and nurturance, marriage and maternity at once became metaphors for the special relationship between Christ and the community: the church was Christ's spouse, and the individual believers were their children.

Leverenz observes that female and child imagery, features of the "language of Puritan feeling," permitted men to express a need for dependence otherwise denied them by their role in Puritan society, and the curious image of the ministers as the church's breasts (occasionally, as Christ's milk-filled breasts) call attention to the taboo against transexualism which is in the men's case preempted. At the same time, such license was not generally granted to women. We may note Bradstreet's considerable task in maintaining a consistently "female" voice in "The Four Humours." Bradstreet intends to make "Choler," "Blood," "Melancholy," and "Flegme" sisters (as well as daughters of the four elements, whose dialogue precedes theirs). "Choler" says,

We both once Masculines, the world doth know,  
Now Feminines (a while) for love we owe  
Unto your Sister-hood, which makes us tender  
Our noble selves, in a lesse noble Gender.  

But Bradstreet sees the inconsistency in such a strategy, for choler is not a feminine characteristic at all. Indeed, choler manifests itself in the distinctly masculine vocations of king, courtier, and warrior. If "Choler" were to speak in these masculine voices, she would in effect cross gender lines. Bradstreet overcomes the difficulty by keeping "Choler" an
abstract principle: "yet man for Choler, is the proper seat." And in a
clever twist, man becomes her subject:

I in his heart erect my regal throne,
Where Monarch-like I play, and sway alone.

In subtly asserting female authority as she does in "The Four
Humours" (in her elegy on Elizabeth, we shall see that she is more
vehemently direct), Bradstreet braves the overwhelming mind-set of
New England Puritanism which presented the errand as an essentially
masculine undertaking and which reinforced in fact and imagery the
traditional notions of women's passivity and submissiveness, of her
inherent emotionalism and weakness. In order to do this, however,
Bradstreet has gone outside the Puritan exegetical system to the wider
tradition of English literature and history. Closer to the fact may be
that the tradition of English literature and history (which came to her
through her father's attention to her education) opened her imagination
to the possibility of expressing an alternative, "feminine" point of
view. Why such an issue should become urgent is clear from her
dedicatory poem to her father which appeared in The Tenth Muse.

Learning has made her hungry for more; the poetry that she has read,
especially her father's verse, has inspired her to "mount high" with an
"Eagles quill." Bradstreet simply wants to write; she wants to be
original, treating heretofore conventional themes in a new way. As
Joseph McElrath more than suggests, Bradstreet may never have expected
the reading audience that she eventually acquired with the publication
of The Tenth Muse in 1650, and Several Poems in 1678; but she clearly
thought that a woman ought to have such an audience and that a woman could
respond poetically to the serious issues of the day. Thus, Bradstreet's
efforts between 1638-49 were focused primarily upon exploring historical, political, and cosmological topics—all of which were timely. These interests produced the poetry of her own public voice, which includes the partisan "A Dialogue Between Old England and New," and which allowed her to cast a critical eye upon contemporary political tendencies. As we shall see, while Edward Johnson fulminated about the settlers as Christ's warriors and about the errand and the English civil war as battles in the war against Antichrist, Bradstreet in the persona of "Flegme" (the non-soldier and real heroine of the quaternions) deplores war as the result of the pompous posturings of statecraft, and exalts the mind and the soul. "Flegme," as Bradstreet says, "was judg'd, for kindnesse to excel."

Bradstreet's support for Parliament in "A Dialogue" is offset in her long piece "The Four Monarchies," in which an investigation into human history reveals nothing more than a weary series of lethal intrigues and territorial conflicts. Bradstreet concludes that there is little nobility in bloodshed over titles and possessions. Her horror reaches its peak in the execution of Charles I, which is presented metaphorically in "David's Lamentation for Saul and Jonathan."

In the absence of any direct statement by Bradstreet, it would be risky to conclude that she rejected the Puritan errand outright. Nevertheless, a consideration of all of her early verse, especially in light of what she later had to say (both in poetry and prose) about worldly vanity reveals a preponderant inclination to reject the collective emphasis on militarism. The public myth of the errand, in its overtly optimistic predictions about subjugating the land and its indigenous peoples, moreover, simply was not a central feature of Bradstreet's point of view as it had
been with Johnson and Wigglesworth, for perhaps the obvious reason that subjugating others and possessing things in her own right was not a part of her indoctrination as a woman. Dominance or superiority of a kind could be achieved by knowing and by writing, however, since writing imposed an order upon facts and required a point of view. We might expect Bradstreet to continue to pursue her early intellectual inquiries, especially by making use of the material and language of the broader historical and literary tradition since these had afforded her the advantage of a critical distance. But such is not the case, for Bradstreet was never able to fully overcome her sense of inadequacy in the exclusively masculine domain of poetry and historiography. Nor did she overcome what Harold Bloom has so loudly touted as the "anxiety of influence": a sense of abject indebtedness to her father and a near idolatrous love for him prevented her from feeling that her own efforts at writing could ever surpass his. Beyond these causes for Bradstreet's shift after the 1640's into an exclusively private voice was the vigorous suppression of Hutchinson in the thirties which provided the community with a powerful example of the fate awaiting feminine interlopers into male preserves--an example that was brought stunningly home to Bradstreet in 1647 when her own sister was excommunicated for playing the preacher.

Bradstreet apparently decided that her soul's salvation warranted her complete submission to the Puritan ethos regarding women, yet she did not cease to write poetry, even when her maternal duties to eight children seemed to overwhelm her. She turned rather to her conjugal and maternal condition and to the events of every day for the material of her verse. The earliest signs of her predilection for such material can be
found in the quaternions: specifically, "The Four Ages of Man," a series of monologues presented by "Childhood," "Youth," "Middle Age," and "Old Age." In each of the monologues, Bradstreet enlivens what could have been mere papier mache figures with details drawn from first hand acquaintance. The character of "Old Age," for example, was surely patterned after Thomas Dudley, and the conversational tone of the monologue suggests Bradstreet's use of English history as she probably heard it nostalgically retold be her father. "Childhood's" monologue contains a graphic description of the demands of motherhood; clearly Bradstreet, at this point with three or four little ones underfoot, was speaking from direct experience. Says "Childhood":

My mothers breeding sicknes, I will spare;
Her nine months weary burden not declare.
To shew her bearing paine, which cann't be told by tongue;
With tears into this world I did arrive;
My mother stil did waste, as I did thrive:
Who yet with love, and all alacrity,
Spending was willing, to be spent for me;
With wayward cryes, I did disturbe her rest;
Who sought stil to appease me, with her brest,
With weary armes, she danc'd, and By, By, sung,
When wretched I (ungrate had done the wrong)." 

Bradstreet renders here a touching picture of a mother's love and trials. Some twenty years later, this portrait will take on the specific lineaments of her own eight children as they near the age of independence and as Bradstreet approaches the end of her reproductive time. 

In "The Four Ages," Bradstreet makes interesting but nonetheless ornamental use of her personal experience; the characters are finally composites whose overall purpose is to illustrate emblematically the ancient and revered concept of the vanity of worldly pursuits and the Puritan notion of man's inherent depravity. It is only after approximately 1650 (that is,
after the disgrace and death of Hutchinson and the humiliation of Sarah Keane, and after the death of Dudley), that Bradstreet turns her experience into poetic occasions for soul-searching. The poet in the last twenty years of her life demonstrated a preference for introspection and meditation specifically aimed at arriving at an assurance of the presence of saving grace. "The Flesh and the Spirit" and "Contemplations" are two poems of this later period that illustrate not only Bradstreet's mature technical skill, but more important, her thorough absorption in the question of election and reprobation and in the ritual of conversion by saving grace. The so-called "marriage poems" aptly show the intensification of Bradstreet's point of view toward a more patently Puritan outlook appropriate to a woman: the poems written roughly in the forties are addressed to Simon directly and they strongly suggest a sexual passion, as well as the more suitable Puritan attitudes of mutual respect and the desire to share eternal life. Rhetorically stylized and replete with classical imagery, the poems are Bradstreet's closest approach to the language and form of the love sonnet. The poems of the early sixties, however, are strikingly different. In them, Bradstreet speaks to God directly; her concern is the eternal salvation of Simon and herself. Occasioned by Simon's departure for England, the poems communicate a desperate loneliness and dependence which in the earlier poems is submerged in ornamentation. The embellished style of the earlier poems yields to the stark, almost prosaic style in the latter group. As in the other poems of the later period, Bradstreet has ceased to be the social historian and critic; she has adopted the life of the solitary Puritan believer and woman for whom the "errand into the wilderness" is entirely spiritual and thus internal. It
should be added, however, that some of her best poems came out of her painful spiritual crises, as well as some of the worst. By the same token, "The Four Monarchies" suffers from her unfortunate choice of meter as well as from a lack of coherent organization, whereas her elegy on Elizabeth is a tour de force of conviction and passion. Clearly, Bradstreet is at her poetic best when she knows her subject thoroughly and when she feels it deeply. Finally, Bradstreet's sense of poetic purpose comes to rest in her commitment to motherhood; for in writing about her own spiritual struggles and triumphs, she sees a way to continue to influence her children long after their adulthood and her menopause have put an end to her active life.
NOTES


Cotton, God's Promise to his Plantation, p. 18.


See Appendix.

Koehler, p. 46.

Koehler, p. 28; Leverenz, p. 84.

Koehler, pp. 219-21. Koehler explains (p. 221) the attraction that antinomianism held for women:

Antinomianism accomplished what Roger Williams' theology had strongly hinted at, extending the feminine experience of humility to both sexes (although not through the vehicle of sackcloth and ashes). That, in turn, paradoxically created the possibility of feminine pride, as Anne Hutchinson's dynamic example amply demonstrates.

Leverenz, pp. 38, 84.

Leverenz, p. 82.

Leverenz, p. 70, passim.

Koehler, pp. 42-4; Leverenz, p. 35.


If the rare Learning of a Daughter, was not the least of those bright things that adorn'd no less a Judge of England than Sir Thomas More; it must now be said, that a Judge of New-England, namely, Thomas Dudley, Esq; had a Daughter (besides other Children) to be a Crown unto him. . . . Madam Ann Bradstreet. the Daughter of our Governour Dudley, and the Consort of our Governour Bradstreet, whose Poems, divers times Printed, have afforded a grateful Entertainment unto the Ingenious, and a Monument beyond the Stateliest Marbles.
29 Leverenz, p. 84ff.
30 Leverenz, p. 85.
32 Quoted in Leverenz, p. 82. Leverenz also quotes John Cotton, p. 85: "... God hath expressly forbidden them all place of speech and power in the Church ... unless it be to join with the rest of the church, in singing forth the public praises of the Lord ... . I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence."
33 Leverenz, pp. 86ff.; 138ff.
34 Quoted in Leverenz, p. 84.
37 Leverenz, p. 144.
38 Leverenz, p. 140ff.
41 Cotton, A Brief Exposition of the Whole Book of Canticles, p. 109; also cited by Leverenz, p. 5.
42 Edward Taylor, "Meditation 2.150. Cant. 7.3 Thy two breasts are like two young Roes that are twins," in Meserole, p. 137.
43 Leverenz, p. 86.
44 Bradstreet, p. 21.
45 Bradstreet, p.45.
46 Bradstreet, pp. 5-6.
48 Koehler, p. 44.
49 Bradstreet, p. 37
50 Bradstreet, "In Reference to her Children," pp. 184-6.
Since the publication of The Tenth Muse in 1650, Anne Bradstreet has lacked neither a reading audience nor critical response. Despite a period of comparative quiet between 1678, the date of the second and posthumous edition entitled Several Poems, and the midpoint of the eighteenth century, editions of her complete works have appeared at a fairly regular pace. A reprint of Several Poems appeared in 1758; and in the nineteenth century, two editions emerged. John Harvard Ellis's volume of 1867 supplied the prose meditations for the first time, in addition to poems not previously published. For approximately the next hundred years, his introductory essay provided the standard biography of Bradstreet, notwithstanding Helen Stuart Campbell's largely conjectural treatment of the poet's life in 1891. The other edition appeared in 1897, and it contained an introduction by the poet's volubly condescending nephew "many time removed," Charles Eliot Norton. The twentieth century has witnessed an increased scholarly interest in Bradstreet's work, stemming from two historical and critical lines of investigation: revisionist history and feminist criticism. The so-called revisionist history written by Samuel Eliot Morison, Perry Miller, and others, began as a reaction against nineteenth-century disapproval of Puritanism (based upon prejudgments about the development of western cultures, according to the revisionists) and it has provided important insights into the growth of Puritan ideology out of its British social and
historical contexts. Feminist scholarship of the colonial period of the United States aims to rediscover woman artists, and to interpret their literary accomplishments in the light of their social and historical predicaments. Both revisionist history and feminist criticism present Bradstreet as an example of how public ideology affected the individual in seventeenth century New England, but with somewhat different results. More concerned with describing Puritanism, the revisionists tend to settle upon aspects of Bradstreet's conformity to Puritan doctrines and mores. The feminists, in asserting a qualitative judgment of Puritanism, view Bradstreet to have initially rebelled against the patriarchy (and to have eventually acquiesced to it). Such interest in Bradstreet's work has spurred the publication of the complete canon. The Ellis edition was reprinted in 1932. In 1965, Josephine K. Piercy produced a facsimile of The Tenth Muse, and this was followed in 1967 by Jeannine Hensely's The Works of Anne Bradstreet. In 1981, Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., and Allan P. Robb produced the latest and most elaborate edition, The Complete Works of Anne Bradstreet.

The history of the publication of Bradstreet's works is worth noting in view of the fact that the journals of John Winthrop and William Bradford were not published in full until 1825-6 and 1856, respectively. These works by Bradstreet's immediate contemporaries have been the traditional sources of information about life in early New England. Bradstreet's early and sustained elevation to literary fame was due more to her position as the first important poet in English-speaking America, than to a conviction that her verse was worth reading. Bradstreet was the first Anglo-American woman to publish a volume of poetry, and her poems reveal the "first developments of a domestic strand of poetry in English." Yet the meaning of Bradstreet's
achievement has been variously interpreted according to the changing perspectives of historians and literary critics. Thanks to Bradstreet's nineteenth century editors, and especially to Moses Coit Tyler (a critic of the same period), the notion has persisted until quite recently that Bradstreet is a minor poet, a flawed mimic of the male poets of her age, and worth reading only as a lyrical alternative to the thundering dogmatists. The source of this notion is the nineteenth century perception of itself as enlightened. Nineteenth century British and American historiographers generally subscribed to a theory of progress that predicted the triumph of western culture, since the eighteenth century, over the barbarism of previous ages. Scholars such as Samuel Miller, Henry Buckle, W. E. H. Lecky, and Edward Eggleston hailed scientific rationalism as a sign that western man had vanquished ignorance and superstition, features that they found in seventeenth century Puritanism. This perception of history as progressive transferred easily to literary criticism. That Puritanism was inimical to imaginative literature was a fixed idea in the minds of many commentators and it forced the opinion that early New England failed to produce any worthwhile poets.

The discovery of "one poet who, in some worthy sense, found in poetry a vocation," however, did not prevent nineteenth century critics from assuming a condescending attitude toward Bradstreet's achievement. Moses Coit Tyler thought Bradstreet's "The Four Monarchies" to be "nothing more than rhymed historical teaching." He approved of "Contemplations," as did Ellis and Norton; but all three men felt that except for the domestic poems, Bradstreet's work was generally an inferior facsimile of poetry by men—and the worst of them; at that. Tyler singled out du Bartas as a
particularly "bad" poet who influenced Bradstreet. "How much better," Tyler laments, "had she bravely looked into her own heart, and out upon the real world, and given voice to herself than to mere erudition."

A more sympathetic Ellis kept in mind the hardships of wilderness life and of Bradstreet's cultural isolation from England:

No genial coterie of gifted minds was near to cheer and inspire her. No circle of wits to sharpen and brighten her faculties; she had no elegant surroundings of rich works of art to encourage and direct her tastes: but the country was a wilderness, and the people among whom she dwelt were the last in the world to stimulate or appreciate a poet.

Despite the drawback of her environment, Ellis commends Bradstreet's "many beautiful and original ideas, not badly expressed"; but he suggests that their chief merit lay in being a "valuable relic of the earliest literature of the United States," a literature impoverished by isolation from the British mainstream. Ellis is of one mind with the general opinion of his age when he denies that "after 'twice drinking the nectar of her lines,' a reader would 'welter in delight.'" Norton refers to the "slenderness of her poetic outfit," attributing this to Puritan hostility to art generally, the poor literary models of the day (again, principally du Bartas), and Bradstreet's own lack of technical skill. What seems to especially disturb Norton is the absence in her verse of allusions to the wilderness experience:

It is, indeed, a striking fact in regard to her poetry and a criticism upon it as well, that in it all there is scarcely a reference to New England, and no word from which one might gather that it had been written in the New World at a time so difficult, so interesting, so strange to these new-comers from the Old. All her allusions, her figures of speech, her illustrations are drawn from the worn-out literary stock. No New England bird sings in her pages; it is Philomel, or the lark; no New England flower seems to have been dear to her; no incident or aspect of life peculiar to New England is described or even referred to. Nothing can be gathered from her verses in regard to ... the social experience of the first emigrant ...
Founding their judgment of Bradstreet upon the presumption that seventeenth century New England was a collection of dour people whose religious fervor and wilderness suffering undermined poetry, the critics view Bradstreet as an oddity, as someone forcibly wrenched from the European mainstream and struggling without success to gain re-entry. Convinced that poetry could hardly flourish in a crusty environment that subordinated the imagination to the purposes of religion, they fail to perceive an emotional component in Puritanism of which Bradstreet's verse is an undeniable manifestation. Merely reporting the perceptible pattern of development in Bradstreet's work from public to private voice, Tyler and the others do not investigate the connection between Puritanism and Bradstreet's gradual acceptance of her fate as an exile. Nor does it occur to them than an esthetic could have grown out of the Puritan doctrines of election and reprobation, and out of the Puritan insistence upon looking inward for signs of saving grace. All of these issues are addressed by the revisionists and the feminists. Unencumbered by the progressivist imperative to prove that the present constituted an improvement over the past, the revisionists are "free to explore conflicts and ambiguities within an intellectual system, without having to pit it against another body of ideas or decide what it contributed to social change." The historians begin with the proposition that each period wrestles with its own special questions that test the strength of a community's social and moral structures; the scholars attempt to reconstruct the ambience of seventeenth century New England in order to identify and explain the theological, intellectual, and cultural forces at work. Miller, for example, seems most intrigued by Puritanism's "intricate engagement with
The revisionists' reconstruction of the milieu of seventeenth century New England shows that Puritanism was a complex system, rather than an aberration of European thought or a stagnant first phase of American history. The scholars view New England Puritanism as a response on an epic scale to the decay of political and religious life in England. The Puritans' choice of civil government and church polity, which Scripture endorsed, was in effect a long developing reaction against demonstrably increasing repression at home. Puritanism fares well in the hands of revisionist historians, as do individual Puritans. Morison's Builders of the Bay Colony reads like a saga of heroes, as rhapsodic as Tyler's account is satiric. Of importance here is Morison's essay "Mistress Anne Bradstreet," since it is the first departure from the critical stance of the nineteenth century literary commentators. Morison is conscious of the new ground he is breaking, and he is most certainly thinking of Norton when he asserts:

It is a curious fact that the historians of American literature . . . have treated Anne Bradstreet with almost offensive condescension as a worthy Puritan housewife who merely imitated the worst English style of the period, and served up warmed-over English scenery to her benighted if admiring neighbors. It would seem impossible that these pontiffs of criticism could have read anything but 'The Tenth Muse.' . . . /But/ it is clear that Anne was a poet sub specie aeternitatis. In music, technique, and above all in the admirable qualities of reticence and economy, she was superior to some of the favorite poets of the 'Augustan age' of New England literature.

Morison's interest in viewing the relationship between ideology and the individual made him the first to recognize that Bradstreet's response of faith was evolutionary and not static. He noted that her initial resistance to the New England experience (contained in her famous statement, "... I perennial issues of human consciousness: feeling versus intellect, freedom versus necessity, mind versus matter."
found: a new world and new manners, at which my heart rose"
) eventually
gave way to reconciliation to her fate as a wilderness wife and mother.
Indeed, the poems which Morison regards as most admirable for their
"reticence and economy" were those of her later years, the meditation and
domestic pieces, and these emerged out of her personal experiences. "The
Flesh and the Spirit" Morison feels is "one of the best expressions in
English literature of the conflict described by St. Paul in the eighth
chapter of his Epistles to the Romans." In "Upon the Burning of her
House" he finds an agreeable and controlled sentimentality. As though
answering Tyler's complaint that Bradstreet refused to "look into her own
heart," Morison cites numerous poems on the births and deaths of loved
ones, her illnesses, and the frequent separations from her husband as
evidence that Bradstreet is a poet of the personal event. To the charge that
Bradstreet seems oblivious to her New England surroundings, Morison counters
that "the primeval forest beside her later home in North Andover, and the
yet untamed Merrimac nearby, inspired ... 'Contemplations.'"

Morison's rescue of Bradstreet from the rough grasp of the nine­
teenth century critics does not prevent him from agreeing with some of
their contentions, however. "Just as their [the Puritans'] rejection of
religious symbolism closed for [them] many opportunities for pictorial,
plastic, and musical art, so their dismissal of the drama as 'the Devil's
chapel' cut them off from one great branch of literary art," he argues.
Nor does Bradstreet escape entirely unscathed. Like Tyler, Morison found
most of the verse in The Tenth Muse, namely, the quaternions, "The Four
Monarchies," and the elegies, to suffer badly from the influence of du Bartas
(although he is quick to recall that a youthful Dryden admired the French
poet). But if Morison feels that The Tenth Muse was the "unattracive"
product of Bradstreet's "three or four childless years at Newtowme," at least he does not condemn it. Morison concludes that Bradstreet's poetry was "minor . . . but not minima."

The importance of Morison's essay should not be underestimated, for it sets the tone for subsequent Bradstreet scholarship. His biographical approach suggests that questions about point of view, meaning, and the shift in genres can be legitimately addressed by taking into account the events in the poet's life. Consistent with his overview of Puritanism, Morison sees Bradstreet to be intimately engaged with a dynamic ideology which she personalized in her early life. Hence, he makes it possible to read Bradstreet's verse in light of such topics as predestination versus free will, providence versus fate, and the world versus the kingdom of God. Finally, Morison is the first to imply a connection between gender and point of view; although in comparison to the sophisticated inquiries on the issue by present day scholars, Morison appears somewhat timid. Still, he suggests that Bradstreet's verse testifies to the female experience in early New England, and this is precisely the question that has captured the attention of feminist scholars of seventeenth century Puritanism.

Josephine Piercy, Ann Stanford, and Elizabeth Wade White are the first feminist scholars to assess Bradstreet's work, writing in the late 1960's and early 70's. All three scholars begin with an awareness of the special difficulties of being a woman in seventeenth century Puritan New England. First, of course, is the obvious hardship associated with removal from the comparative comforts of civilized England to the untamed American wilderness. Certainly, the men had not gone untouched by this traumatic change; but the "errand into the wilderness" was the brainchild of men
rather than women, who came as appendages to the men. They were mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters of the patriarchs, and they had virtually no say in the construction of the ecclesiastical and civil government. The scholars see in Bradstreet's verse a protracted struggle to come to terms with a system that demanded total faith and loyalty. Further, the scholars are sensitive to the conflict between opposing social roles in the seventeenth century. Writing learned poetry and caring for a husband and children were generally regarded to be mutually exclusive, as Bradstreet suggests in this angry outburst in the "Prologue" to The Tenth Muse:

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue
Who says my hand a needle better fits.
A poet's pen all scorn I should thus wrong,
For such despite they cast on female wits:
If what I do prove well, it won't advance,
They'll say it's stol'n, or else it was by chance.

What is further asserted in the passage is that erudition was thought to lie outside the capability of women, and that most Puritans thought it a frivolous and unbecoming endeavor for women to write learned poetry.

Piercy's Anne Bradstreet, published in 1965, is the first modern full-length treatment of all of Bradstreet's verse. Piercy attempts to demonstrate the poet's contact with the historical and literary influences of her time, brought about under her father's tutelage. Piercy also advances the idea that Bradstreet's verse centers on her "very personal struggle with orthodoxy," and that it is ostensibly detached from the "apocalyptic underpinning" of New England society. Piercy's image of Bradstreet is of a tortured soul who early on rebelled against the "Puritan pieties that seemed the weary drizzle of an unremembered dream," and who finally embraces the faith of her father and husband in the effort to find assurance of her personal salvation. This image, augmented by Bradstreet's prose
meditations, is corroborated in the perceptible shift from the public verse of erudition (in which she shows her dependence upon du Bartas, Joshua Sylvester, Raleigh, among others) to the quiet and controlled private voice. It is in the verse of Bradstreet's maturity that Piercy sees Bradstreet the Puritan; the poet finally comes to accept the fundamental teachings of her faith:

Every fact of life has spiritual meaning;
God has made men unequal in body and mind /and this notion carries over to the disparity between the sexes/; . . . God can and does take part in the affairs of man; . . . There is one Christ at the head of a hierarchy of souls; . . . God has decreed election and reprobation.34

Ann Stanford focuses on the tension between the Puritan demand to believe and the personal need to be shown. Bradstreet fits squarely in this paradigm, for her poetry and prose meditations give evidence of the struggle to bend a skeptical and frequently doubting mind to the dogma of God's inscrutable providence. "The Flesh and the Spirit," "Contemplations," the elegy on the death of her granddaughter Elizabeth, and "Upon the Burning of her House" reveal that Bradstreet tempered her powerful emotions with recognition of her fallen human nature and with submission to God's chastising hand. Stanford is impressed by Bradstreet's unflagging determination to write despite the pervasive prejudice against women who exceeded their domestic roles, and she is the first to use the word "feminist" to describe Bradstreet's perspective on the issue of women and learning. Stanford therefore reinforces the notion merely suggested by Piercy that Bradstreet was a rebel: "The very fact that she wrote, that she considered herself a poet, that she continued to write in spite of criticism, indicates that she was willing to act independently in spite of the dogmatic assertions of many of her contemporaries . . . ."
Focusing mainly upon literary questions, Stanford demonstrates more thoroughly than Piercy that Bradstreet made extensive use of the Renaissance poetic tradition. Thus she corroborates the position of revisionist historians that Puritans appreciated the learned studies. Her discovery that Bradstreet's increasing tendency toward introspective verse matched her gradual physical removal into the more sparsely populated regions of the colony, leads to the inference that the secular (Stanford uses the term pagan) point of view in the public poems resulted from the poet's early years of contact with humanistic learning. Most important, Stanford is the first to enunciate Bradstreet's position in American literature:

Anne Bradstreet stands on the threshold of American letters as the first colonial to write out of the conscious desire to be a poet. Though she lived at the far edge of European culture, her poems cover a broad range of religious, social, political, intellectual, and domestic subjects. They also show an active concern with the world of affairs and also with the inner life. They reflect wide reading and put to use her knowledge of most of the literary forms of her era. Through its use of the tradition, her work forms a link with English and Continental literature. But she adapts the tradition to the circumstances of life in the new world. She stands at the very beginning of that divergence of American from British literature which was to grow ever wider as Americans identified their unique concerns and represented them in their own forms. Though isolated in space, she was never isolated in time. Her writing contains the tensions, sometimes in still shadowy form, that remained long in American life and literature. She is the civilized European facing the wilderness; she is the colonial gradually gaining roots in the new land and finally sloughing off the old world.

And finally, Bradstreet represents "the right, still sought, for woman to shape her own potential beyond the confines of an ordained role."

During the time of Piercy's and Stanford's researches, two important works appeared: Hensley's edition of the complete works in 1967, and Elizabeth Wade White's biography of Bradstreet in 1971. In the "Foreword" to
the Hensley edition, Adrienne Rich articulates much the same view as the other commentators of this period. On the question of Bradstreet's motivation to write in the early years, Rich says that

"The early pieces seem to have been composed in a last compulsive effort to stay in contact with the history, traditions, and values of her former world; nostalgia for English culture, surely, kept her scribbling at those academic pages, long after her conviction had run out. Present experience was still too raw; one sought relief from its daily impact in turning Raleigh and Camden into rhymed couplets."

In other words, Bradstreet wrote the public elegies, the quaternions, and "The Four Monarchies" as "a way of escaping from the conditions of her experience rather than as an expression of what she felt and knew."

Rich also observes an increasing maturity in Bradstreet's later work which came from seeing her own work in print. Aware that she now had a public audience, Bradstreet was filled with "a new assurance." The salient feature of the later verse was the poet's humility. Aware of her own frailty and of God's majesty, Bradstreet's sense of her smallness before God "gives a peculiar poignancy to her more personal verse, and suggests an organic impulse toward economy and modesty of tone."

Notwithstanding her mannered style and irritating condescension, Elizabeth Wade White's biography, entitled Anne Bradstreet: The Tenth Muse, performs a valuable service to Bradstreet scholarship. First, it gathers the scattered accounts of Bradstreet's ancestry, separating the probable from the apocryphal, and it analyzes (although generally) the shifting political winds between 1630 and 1660. This has the effect of opening up the meaning of some enigmatic lines, such as appear in the elegy on Sidney, and accounting for their revision or deletion after 1650. Thus, White suggests that Bradstreet's revisions give evidence of a developing
critical attitude. Equally impressive is White's catalogue of women writers, beginning with Juliana of Norwich, whose fourteenth century writings were published in 1670, and culminating with Aphra Behn (1640-1689). White describes a sizeable body of prose and verse written between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries by women who shared generally a common background of affluence and learning. These include Margaret Beaufort (Countess of Richmond), Catherine Parr, Anne Askew (Lady Kyme), Isabella Whitney, Mary Sidney (Sir Philip's sister), Lady Mary Wroth (Sidney's niece), Rachel Speight, Bathsua Makin, Margaret Lucas (Duchess of Newcastle), Katharine Fowler (the "Matchless Orinda"), Anne Collins, and Anne Finch (Countess of Winchelsea). However, there is no evidence that Bradstreet was familiar with any of the writings of these women; White seems more interested to account for John Woodbridge's admission in his introduction to The Tenth Muse that he found some books by women to be "so witless, intricate/ So devoid of sense, and truth." White speculates that Woodbridge saw his sister-in-law's verse to be unique and therefore worthy of dissemination beyond the narrow confines of her family and friends. He saw that Bradstreet's work "was not liable to be viewed as something of a curiosity, because of either the exalted position of the author or of the very limited nature of the subject," as had been the case with the other women, as White sees it. White views Bradstreet as having had the distinct opportunity to participate in a grand social project in a new world, which combined with her humanist training to release passions that "would have been suppressed, or greatly enfeebled, by the traditional confinements and taboos" of English life. Thus, White overturns the stubbornly held notion that the wilderness experience dulled poetic sensibilities.
Despite White's additions to the study of Bradstreet, some of her conclusions have drawn serious challenge. She pronounces without qualification that the substantive changes in poems reproduced in 1678, were the result of Bradstreet's editorial hand and thus reflect the poet's attitude toward her subject matter. That Bradstreet revised is certain, since we have her testimony to that fact in the poem "The Author to Her Book"; but McElrath, Bradstreet's most recent editor, asserts that no one can know whether all of the revisions are actually Bradstreet's. In such emendations as occurred in the elegy on Sidney, for example, the claim to the "self-same blood" is altered to read "English blood." Unlike White, McElrath is not secure in the idea that Bradstreet herself made the discovery of her more distant relation to Sidney; indeed, it is possible that Bradstreet's survivors were responsible for the alterations, for it was to them that her literary remains were consigned. The fact that Bradstreet never had any direct participation in the publication of her works (Woodbridge surreptitiously carried the manuscript of The Tenth Muse to London and Several Poems emerged six years after her death) restrains McElrath from repeating what he feels are doctrinal excesses on White's part.

Another related problem in White's exposition is her propensity to assert without documentation or proper discussion ideas that have yet to be demonstrated. The argument she uses, for example, to support her conclusion about Bradstreet's "passion and aspiration" is founded upon her acceptance of the premise that the women of Massachusetts Bay "took their full share . . . of the responsibilities and even practical planning" of the settlement. If this means that women consulted on an equal basis with
men on civil and religious matters, White would do well to examine the sizeable evidence to the contrary. She no doubt takes this notion from Morison's essay, but without sufficient note of Morison's tone and intent. Reacting against nineteenth century cynicism, Morison wrote an ode to joy; White, on the other hand, frequently extends the spare facts of Bradstreet's life and disguises this maneuver as arm-chair history. The effect is a disappointing superficiality in many places where one would expect careful analysis.

Despite individual shortcomings, revisionist historians and feminist critics have greatly enlarged our understanding of Puritans and Puritanism. They offer a reasoned interpretation involving historical, political, theological, and cultural considerations. The scholars present the New England settlers as bound by a vigorous religious faith, which included a wide capacity for fanaticism. But the scholars have tried to show that Puritanism made sense out of the ideological chaos of a period which linked politics and religion inextricably together, and that as an antecedent to such intellectual dispositions as deism, rationalism, and manifest destiny, Puritanism is worthy of study. The "new look" of New England Puritanism includes simultaneously an intense earthiness and and explicit apocalypticism. Arising out of the embittered lower and middles classes, and joined by disaffected members of the aristocracy, Puritanism embodied an aspiration to complete the process of reformation begun by Henry VIII, but thwarted by successive monarchs, principally the Stuarts. Convinced that they were an integral part of a divinely directed world movement, Puritans aimed to return man to an original Christianity, free from the doctrinal and ritualistic corruption of the church of Rome. Further, in the effort to bring the gospel to the people, the Puritans insisted upon
a learned clergy and a literate laity. Puritan divines were trained in
history and Ramist logic, as well as theology; the laity were encouraged
to take notes on the sermons and to discuss them with the preachers and
among themselves. Hutchinson's home discussion group, in which she
eventually came to develop her own theological ideas, was an outgrowth of
this feature of Puritan life. The Puritans were also receptive to the
new cosmological theories of the day, so long as God's creative and
redemptive role was included. (Thus, Copernicus' notion of a heliocentric
universe was not rejected out of hand.) Finally, Puritans
found a place for poetry. As Robert Daly and Karl Keller point out,
the "saints" wrote about one another, celebrating their victories over
Satan and the wilderness; the Puritan focus on the conversion experience,
the insistence on introspection, and the preference for a plain and
lucid style of preaching and writing also gave rise to the poetry of
self-examination (which eventually adopted modified forms of Catholic
meditation). Nor was versifying the exclusive domain of a few preachers:
Harold Jantz, in writing about the generation of poets after Bradstreet,
makes clear that verse was written by "a large number of . . . laymen
without the benefits of a college education." As we have already noted,
Johnson's Wonder-Working Providence contains over fifty commendatory poems
celebrating the lives and work of the numerous patriarchs; and Bradstreet
composed public and private verse that filled two volumes.

Bradstreet's verse is, according to the revisionists and the
feminists, the best of the period, superseded only by the verse of Edward
Taylor who came after her (and whose poetry was discovered in the twentieth
century). What the scholars see in Bradstreet is a woman who desired to
be poet and who was in touch with the intellectual and literary times. They
see her to have been essentially Puritan in outlook: although initially resisting her lot, she came eventually to embrace it and her treatment of human experience was colored by Puritan concepts of election, conversion, and salvation. Indeed, the "Puritan morphology of conversion stands as the archetype for the order" in Bradstreet's private verse. Such views of Puritanism and Bradstreet have led some commentators since 1970 to advance a number of curious as well as untenable ideas. Daly and Keller have proposed that Puritanism liberated women by extending to them spiritual equality with men, and that this equality was given social expression in the wilderness experience when women perforce worked side by side with men (the "romantic" rumor begun by Morison and perpetuated by White). Daly and Keller explain Bradstreet's particular difficulties with adjustment and her religious questioning as the normal expression of the Puritan insistence on self-examination; self-doubt was to be expected, after all, in the context of a predestinarian system. Bradstreet's self-doubt was substantially no different than that of Edward Taylor or Cotton Mather. Nor can her complaints about sexism be construed as rebellion against the Puritan order, according to Daly and Keller. Rejecting Stanford's early observations, Keller asserts: "It was Anne Bradstreet's Puritan orthodoxy that encouraged what independence we find in her, not her independence that made her wayward. . . . Puritanism liberated Anne Bradstreet not to heresy, but to duty." We may note with considerable irony that such orthodoxy "liberated" Anne Hutchinson to exile; and insofar as women poets are concerned, it "encouraged independence" in only one. Thus, we are left with a questionable assessment of Puritanism, as well as an incomplete view of Bradstreet.
Making similar claims are McElrath and Robb. Aiming to clarify the "shadowy background" of Bradstreet's verse, they assert two propositions:

1. That the texts which have come down to the twentieth century are "strictly speaking, not Anne's texts. They are best termed the collaborative productions of a sector of seventeenth century Anglo-American culture: a collaboration involving Anne, her relatives, friends, editors, and printers. . . ." In short, The Tenth Muse is the "consequence of a nexus of familiar, friendly, and business lines of relationship. . . ."51

2. That no one can safely generalize about Puritan attitudes on any topic.

The first proposition derives from the fact already mentioned that Bradstreet had no ostensible influence over the publication of her works. Obviously the modern editor's nightmare, the task of determining whether some--or even all--of the changes in the duplicated verse were those of persons other than the poet is thwarted by the absence of any account of the particulars of Bradstreet's revision practices or of the handling of the manuscripts by her survivors. But McElrath and Robb have blown the issue of revisions out of proportion to . . .its importance in the canon, for the alterations in the duplicated verse are rarely serious enough to warrant a reconsideration of a poem's meaning. Where they do exist, we may want to acknowledge the possibility of their dubious source; but in the absence of absolute proof one way or another, we may be conclude that the changes are just as likely Bradstreet's own. But McElrath and Robb have contorted the act of reading Bradstreet's verse into a textual leap of faith in the poet's authorship, and they have given the unfortunate impression that the poems which we call Bradstreet's are really the product of some clannish conspiracy.
McElrath and Robb's real worries are the feminist implications in White's acceptance of Bradstreet's hand in all of the revisions. For example, if one assumes with White that Bradstreet altered the lines

I praise thee not for this, it is unfit,
This was thy shame, O miracle of wit

which expresses her squeamishness about approving of Sidney's *Arcadia*, to the more censorious

And men of morose minds envy his glory

one can infer that in this instance Bradstreet rejects a particular aspect of male-controlled Puritan ideology: that some literature (in this case, pastoral romance) is to be eschewed for its capacity to excite passions which enervate the will. McElrath and Robb regard this sort of conclusion as unwarranted, since the original assumption is unverifiable. But from there, the editors extend their critical nihilism to all of the verse, disallowing all but the most superficial judgments of Bradstreet's achievement. The following statements drawn from the jointly written introduction typify this problem:

Anne Bradstreet was an extraordinary person . . . a writer of unquestionable major stature.

/A reader discovers/ something more than a woman writer, a Puritan, or a late Renaissance thinker; he may encounter the [sic] artist of her period in American history, one of the major artists of the century, and a magnificent example of a life well lived.52

The intensification is supposed to convey the entire burden of "something more"; yet we cannot know what that is (beyond the platitudes), without the possibility of assessing the historical, social, and cultural forces.
The proposition that current knowledge of Puritan attitudes is at best tentative is an irresponsible reply to the issue. Bradstreet raises numerous times, that versifying was considered to be above a woman's intellectual capacity (thought to be weaker, Bradstreet complains, than a man's) and inconsistent with her role as wife and mother. The editor's recourse to the oversimplifications of Daly and Keller flies in the face of present findings that show that women's roles were defined solely in conjugal, procreative, and domestic terms. Fortunately, such shortsightedness as McElrath and Robb exhibit is limited to a few commentators on Bradstreet. Indeed, feminist scholars continue to pursue the implications in Bradstreet's determination to write despite the injunctions upon seventeenth-century women to silence and submission and their exclusion from a public role in constructing the theological and political framework of the colony. Emily Stipes Watts has said that the Adamic myth fails to speak to the experience of women in America; the idea of a new Adam implicit in the myth of the New Jerusalem did not become part of Bradstreet's outlook. In "The Four Monarchies," Watts sees (although somewhat imprecisely that

Bradstreet's dark vision did not allow for a redemptive or soteriological approach to history. God's various covenants with mankind, so important to the American Puritan, are not noted. . . . Unlike her New England contemporary, William Bradford, another providential historian, Bradstreet does not refer, even obliquely to the expected redemption of the New England elect. . . .

At the same time, Bradstreet lashed out against the pervasive notion of women's intellectual incapacity. Wendy Martin sees the brilliant elegy on Elizabeth I and the quaternions (in which the elements, seasons, and humours are personified as women) to have expressed Bradstreet's
momentary excursion into a "gynocentric universe." This universe, as Watts suggests, is one of unity, stability, and the cessation of all violence.

Stanford demomonstrated that the process of Bradstreet's withdrawal into the poetry of private voice occurred around the midpoint of the century and during the period of her removal to more isolated surroundings. Anne King has added to this observation the history of Hutchinson's public disgrace (which continued to echo as late as 1654, when Johnson published his Wonder-Working Providence). As the court records show (and Bradstreet's father and husband participated in the trial), Hutchinson's condemnation as a heretic included criticism that she surpassed her womanly role in order to play the theologian. King speculates that Hutchinson's humiliation before the entire colony must have adversely affected Bradstreet. Having already expressed her anger over the general denigration of learned women, Bradstreet may have been sobered by the punishment meted out to a woman who talked too much. Of a decidedly different temperament than Hutchinson, Bradstreet sought to avoid such a fate, since it had menacing implications for her personal salvation. King, therefore, sees Bradstreet to have always at least implicitly believed in the Puritan notion of fidelity to one's divinely assigned role, and that she eventually came to embrace it as the only way to save her soul. In subsequent chapters, the present dissertation pursues these intriguing ideas; it demonstrates that in lieu of a public teaching role (which was assumed to be a part of a poet's function), Bradstreet eventually created a use of poetry (and her prose journals) that enabled her to make it a part of her vocation as a mother; for by recounting her soul's struggle, Bradstreet thought she was instructing her children in Christian virtue.
NOTES


Helen Stuart Campbell, Anne Bradstreet and her Time (Boston: D. Lothrop, 1891).


Anne Bradstreet, The Tenth Muse (1650) and From the Manuscripts, Meditations Divine and Morall Together with Letters and Occasional Pieces by Anne Bradstreet, ed. Josephine K. Piercy (Gainesville, Florida: Scholars Facsimile and Reprints, 1965).


Higham, p. 44.

Higham, p. 44.

12 Tyler, p. 248.
14 Tyler, p. 248.
15 Tyler, p. 248.
16 Ellis, p. xlii.
17 Ellis, p. xlii.
18 Ellis, p. xlii. Ellis quotes John Rogers' commendatory poem in the second edition of Bradstreet's verse in 1678.
19 Norton, pp. x-xi.
20 On this issue of female intellectual capacity, Norton seemed to link what he thought were Bradstreet's technical flaws to intellectual shortcomings:

"Du Bartas' Divine Weeks and Works was a poem for men who cared more for purity of doctrine than for purity of poetry, for men more interested in the Bible than in profane literature. . . . The version of Sylvester . . . preserved essentially the character of the original, and there is no reason for wonder that a Puritan girl, . . . inspired with some faint poetic instinct, should have found delight as well as instruction in Du Bartas's verse, and should have taken him for her master in the divine art. . . . But Mrs. Bradstreet has nothing of the energy and abundance of his vein, nothing of the picturesqueness of his broad stream of verse, and her acquisitions--large, even remarkable for a woman in her time and circumstance--were inconsiderable in comparison with his vast if superficial learning. . . ."

Nineteenth century interest in Bradstreet was chiefly antiquarian. As Norton puts the case:

"Mrs. Bradstreet's repute as a poet, great as it was in her own circle, hardly stands the test of time, and it is not their poetic merit which will lead any one at the present day to read her verse. . . ."
With typical hyperbole revealing the literary perspective of his day, Tyler condemns Puritanism and the baroque as the twin marks of a philistine age:

Literature, for Bradstreet, was not a republic of letters hospitable to all forms of human thought, but a strict Puritan commonwealth, founded on a scheme of narrow ascetic intolerance, and excluding from its citizenship some of the sublimest, daintiest, and most tremendous types of literary expression. Evidently, in her mind, William Shakespeare . . . was an alien, and a godless person; and Ben Jonson, Massinger, Beaumont and Fletcher . . . and all the rest of that superb group of masters were sons of Belial. Furthermore while her imagination thus lost the witchery and the stimulation of the great English dramatists, she was taught to seek for the very essence of poetry in the quirks, the puns, and cortorted images, the painful ingenuities of George Wither and Francis Quarles, and especially of 'The Divine Weeks and Works' . . . of du Bartas . . . In short, she was a pupil of the fantastic school of English poetry—the poetry of the later euphuists; the special note of which is the worship of the quaint, the strained, the disproportionate, the grotesque, and the total sacrifice of the beautiful on the altar of the ingenious. Harmony, taste, dignity, even decency, were by this school eagerly cast away, if only an additional twist could be given to the turn of the metaphor, or still another antithesis could be wrenched from the agonies of a weary epithet. . . . These were symptoms of a wider and far deeper literary disease—a disease which, originating in Italy in the sixteenth century, swept westward and northward like the plague, desolating for a time the literatures of Spain, of France, and of England.

The metaphysical school of Donne has long since come into vogue, but where Bradstreet's poetry is concerned—and for the most part she bears little actual resemblance to the metaphysicals—nineteenth century criticism wrought considerable damage. Tyler's attitude survives in milder form as late as 1961, in the enunciations of Roy Harvey Pearce in which his impatience with seventeenth-century New England literature is barely disguised. Referring to Benjamin Tompson's didactic poem New England's Crisis (1676), he says, "Verse like this is perhaps no more than doggerel, worth recalling here only in order to get some perspective on the Puritans' achievement in putting poetry, even of this kind, to its best use" (p. 22). On Bradstreet, he offers this opinion:

The only poet of this order Puritan whom we have good cause to remember for what she did, not what she meant to do, is Anne Bradstreet. Perhaps we remember her too well, because the publication of her poetry in England in 1650 . . . caused such a stir and because she seems so relaxed when compared to other Puritan poets. In all ways, she is the 'easiest' of the Puritan poets, the ease marking her civilized triumph over pioneering conditions which made life terribly hard for a gentlewoman born. Still, she is like her fellows in being essentially a poet of the event, and a not very imaginative one at that.
Higham cites Kenneth Murdock (Increase Mather, 1925), Samuel Eliot Morison (Builders of Bay Colony, 1930) and Perry Miller (The New England Mind: The Seventeenth-Century, 1939), among others, as rejecting the nineteenth century notion of progress, especially as it had appeared in Vernon Parrington's (Main Currents in American Thought, 1927) social and economic criticisms of New England Puritanism, pp. 65-6.

Higham, p. 66.


Morison, p. 323.

Morison, p. 331-2.

Morison, p. 320.

Morison, p. 334.

Morison, pp. 323. 336. Noting "the merest hint of that elfin, almost gamin attitude of Emily Dicklsnon to God," Morison was apparently the first to suggest a spiritual kinship between the two as women poets.


Piercy, "introduction," The Tenth Muse, p. x.


Piercy, Anne Bradstreet, pp. 37-8.


Stanford, "Anne Bradstreet," pp. 33-4. Stanford's most important contribution to Bradstreet scholarship, however, is Anne Bradstreet: The Worldly Puritan (New York: Burt Franklin and Co., 1974), which makes the case for Bradstreet's wide knowledge of the literary traditions of her day, and from which much of this discussion of Stanford's work is distilled.


White, pp. 291–2.

White, p. 292.


Karl Keller, p. 17.

McElrath makes these specific statements in "The Text of Anne Bradstreet, Biographical and Critical Consequences," *Seventeenth Century News*, (Summer-Fall 1976), p. 61. These ideas are unchanged in the "Introduction" to *The Complete Works of Anne Bradstreet*, as are his notions about the possibility of assessing Puritan attitudes from the distance of the twentieth century.

McElrath and Robb, p. xiv.


The idea that gender and literary creativity are linked is not new. It has beginnings in a long-standing equation of creativity to masculinity. Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar point out that western literary tradition has always connected fatherhood and creation, God and the poet, the world as God's book and the poet's book as a world. The connection would at times seem to be more than figurative. Gilbert and Gubar demonstrate that Victorian poets and critics saw the pen as an "instrument of generative power." Even the word "author" implies a connection to male gender since its roots lie in Latin terms for begetting, founding, increasing. Authorship suggests that the poet's works are his progeny, that inspiration (the poet's muse, fancy, imagination) is his spouse, and that both are his property. That women writers have at times expressed self-consciousness and awkwardness in the traditionally male territory of literature suggests that "male sexuality . . . is not just analogically, but actually the essence of literary power."

Gilbert and Gubar's argument, while focusing ultimately on the issue of male-female creativity in the nineteenth century, lends itself very well to laying out the issue of gender and creativity in the seventeenth century. Thomas Carew's elegy upon Donne, for example, employs the diction of gender to account for Donne's creativity. Carew devises an analogy to male aggressiveness and female passivity in which every element other than Donne is cast in a feminine role. Donne's death has made a widow of poetry; his "brave Soule" is a flame that "shot such heat and light" as to
commit "holy Rapes upon our Will." This same flame was "Promethean breath" which begot itself in the "Delphique quire." Having uprooted the weeds of the old poetic order, Donne's creative genius seeded the "Muses' garden" with the new. Upon these ideas, Carew overlays allusions to the Christian notion of salvation. Donne paid the "debts of our penurious bankrupt age" and in doing so, "redeem'd and opened Us a Mine/ Of rich and pregnant phansie, drawne a line/ Of masculine expression . . . ." Carew amplifies the notion of male potency later in the poem by using another sexual image:

Since to the awe of thy imperious wit
Our stubborn language bends, made only fit
With her tough-thick-rib'd hoopes to gird about
Thy Giant phansie, which had prov'd too stout
For their soft melting Phrases.

Carew argues that what distinguishes Donne from the poetasters is his prodigious and forceful wit—the combination of a vigorous intellect, abrupt and convoluted lines, and stunning metaphors—which has broken convention and changed the way men read and write poetry. All of this contrasts sharply with his "soft" and "servile" contemporaries. In Carew's poem, Donne is a husband, a creator, a rapist, and a redeemer. The merger of the poet Donne with these several images illustrates the skillful use of conceited language. The notions of a "masculine line" and a "holy Rape" of the will suggest the shape and effect of a ruggedly intellectual "metaphysical" poetry of which Donne is the father and reigning monarch. Also, Carew's association of Donne with Christ is particularly apt since it recalls the typology of Christ as the divine bridegroom: Christ redeemed his church (mankind) from sin and made her a worthy bride. Carew's use of sacred imagery in this instance reinforces the first idea that Donne is the spouse of poetry.
Carew's elegy is clearly an artifact of sound and sense embodying a studied response to a public event, the death of Donne. The poem is as much an exercise in wit as it is an ardent expression of grief. It may be argued that Carew's sexual imagery is, after all, figurative and appropriate to Donne as a man. But Carew's imagery argues as well that the characteristics of a man are intrinsic to poetic creativity, and his particular use of sexual imagery suggests an essential reciprocity between the man and the poet, intellectuality and creativity, intellectuality and masculinity. Further, the relationship that the poet bears to poetry is shown to be analogous to the sexual relation between a man and a woman. Donne's domination of other poets and poetic forms conveys a similarity to forced intercourse and to female subjection in marriage, although Carew "sanctifies" both of these kinds of behavior.

In developing an argument for Donne's innovative genius, Carew makes comparisons which suppose at least two notions that enjoyed general approval in his time. The first is the overall perception of the purpose of poetry which continued from the previous century into the seventeenth. Poetry existed for instruction and delight, as Ben Jonson noted in Timber:

A Poet is . . . a Maker, or a fainer: His Art, an Art of imitation, or faining; expressing the life of man in fit measure, numbers, and harmony, according to Aristotle. . . . Now, the Poesy is the habit, or the Art: nay, rather the Queen of Arts: which had her Original from heaven.

. . . And, whereas they entitle Philosophy to bee a rigid, and austere Poesie: they have (on the contrary) stiled Poesy, a dulcet and gentle Philosophy, which leads us by the hand to Action with a ravishing delight, and incredible Sweetnes. . . .

The second notion, the so-called "doctrine of subjection and domination," described the hierarchy governing the natural and supernatural worlds. God placed every creature in degree above and below other creatures, and
with his or her station came definable duties and responsibilities. When the concept of hierarchy was applied within or across classes of beings, it became quite complex—as apparent in such various but related ideas as the nine choirs of angels and the shared attributes of superiors and inferiors. It is sufficient to say that in the relationship between the sexes, man was in a demonstrably superior position to woman, both physically and spiritually. To man was granted wisdom and knowledge. By extension, then, into poetic activity, woman was theoretically excluded from writing since she could never teach man anything. Bradstreet iterates the concept of hierarchy succinctly in "The Prologue": *Men have precedency, and still excell,/ . . . Men can doe best, and Women know it well;/ Preheminence in each, and all is yours. . . . ."

The idea of preeminence appears frequently in the seventeenth century to designate the natural (divinely ordained) superiority of male over female. Established in man's original state of innocence, male preeminence was enhanced as a reprisal for Eve's transgression.

The best poetic exposition in the seventeenth century of the pervasively held notion of male preeminence is to be found, of course, in Paradise Lost. According to Milton's account, the world into which God introduced man's "General Parents" was one of innocence and order. In making both Adam and Eve lords over visible creation and in demanding that they both obey his mandate concerning the tree of knowledge, God granted them a kind of parity. This apparent equality between Adam and Eve ended, however, with the general notion about mankind as God's viceroy in the world. In the division of sexes, Milton had no qualms about invoking the same law of domination and subjection as governed every other being, and the application of this principle was understood in terms of
causal categories—the ends for which God created the particular being in question. Adam embodies wisdom—that is, the right combination of knowledge and power—while Eve embodies beauty; and beauty must always submit to reason. Milton has Eve refer to her mate as her "Author and Disposer," and her chief delight is his well-being. In effect, Eve accepts her subordinate position with the intuitive understanding that obedience to God through service to Adam is her very reason for being. "God is thy law, thou mine," says Eve, "to know no more/ Is woman's happiest knowledge and her praise." Whereas Adam is intellectual and assertive, Eve's essential attributes are submissiveness, domestication, beauty, gentleness, modesty, and silence. In recounting the events leading up to and including Satan's seduction of Eve, Milton reinforced the traditional notion that woman (even in the state of innocence) is essentially vulnerable to vanity and pride, the perversions of her native virtue, beauty. Adam, on the other hand, is vulnerable in a different way: although he is ambitious to acquire more knowledge than he needs (the potential danger of which Rafael points out), Adam's nagging preoccupation is his sexual attachment to Eve. He perceives that the formidable threat to wisdom comes from his desire of Eve. He is perplexed that the creature made for his service could, in the most irresistible way, rule him; he speculates that in creating Eve, God may have removed too much from his side or endowed Eve with "Too much of Ornament, in outward show/ Elaborate, of inward less exact." In an ironic foreshadowing of his own part in the fall from grace, Adam explains the strange subjection he feels to the creature intended for his mastery. Milton's language at this point in the poem has a double signification, describing not only Eve's seductive and fatal effect
upon Adam, but also her nullifying effect upon knowledge. Milton suggests an ontological principle about femininity: it is incompatible with knowledge. In the end, beauty triumphs over wisdom when Adam is "fondly overcome with Femal charm."

Milton gives formal approbation in Paradise Lost to the myth of feminine intellectual and moral inferiority. God committed woman to the care and tutelage of man; in turn, men have near absolute control over her. In the material sense, woman is man's creation and she is a possession from the outset. Where she does exercise power, she is sensual and destructive. One cannot fail to miss the critical motif in Milton's narration of mankind's creation in innocence and willful entrance into the disorder of sin: Eve transgressed first by overreaching her nature; Adam followed by stooping beneath his. It remains for the celibate Christ to restore spiritual order; even Satan knows that this new and perfect Adam will resist the blandishments of women, "for Beauty stands/ In the admiration of weak minds/ Led captive." Besides its foundation in scripture, Milton's conception of male preeminence and the nature and purpose of women follows on the heels of an enormous body of sixteenth and seventeenth century debate on the matter, some of which will emerge in the course of this chapter. Naturally, opinion was divided between those who took a "Miltonic" stance and those who sought a more compassionate interpretation of Eve's role in the fall, and by extension a more enlightened view of her post-lapsarian daughters. The "facts," however, weighted heavily in favor of the former group since not even the most liberal mind could circumvent the argument's centerpiece—the scriptural account of the creation and fall.
What happened, then, to women who felt themselves to be "timely
rapt by the Promethean fire"? It must have seemed to Anne Finch,
Mary Sidney, Mary Lee, Rachel Speight, Katherine Phillips, and Anne
Bradstreet that writing poetry was a kind of subversive—at times
pointless—act in a society that told them they lacked the intellectual
acuity, discipline, and moral vision required of art. Yet, they wrote.
In doing so, they confronted psychological and social obstacles more formi-
dable than were met by any aspirant to the "tribe of Ben." Seventeenth
century women poets found themselves in the awkward position of having to
discover their purpose and place in a poetic tradition, as well as to
identify their audience. This quest for membership in the community of
poets begins in a close relationship with sympathetic men. As a rule, the
women's interest in poetry was kindled as a result of the education and
encouragement they received from their fathers, brothers, or husbands.
Rachel Speight, for example, was likely the daughter of the same Thomas
Speight who edited Chaucer. Although the facts of her intellectual
upbringing are unknown, it is not unreasonable to expect that her acquaint-
ance with Latin and rhetoric resulted from her father's instruction. At
any rate, she used her knowledge eloquently against Joseph Swetnam
(The Arraignment of ... Women, 1615), and she earned the commendation of
"Philomathes":

If he that for his Countrie doth expose
himselfe unto the furie of his foe,
Doth merite praise and due respect of those,
for whom he did that perill undergoe:
Then let the Author of this Mouzell true
Receive the like, or right it is her due.
For she to shield her Sex from Slaunders Dart,
and from invective obtrectation [sic]
Hath ventured by force of Learnings Art,
To combat with him, which doth shame his Sexe
By offerinc feeble women to perplex.26

Mary Sidney enjoyed the intimate intellectual and artistic companionship
of her brother Philip, and after his death she took on the task of completing
his translations of the Psalms. She added some one hundred compositions
of her own to his forty-three, gaining the praise of Donne and Samuel
Daniel. Over a century later, Anne Finch published a volume of verse at
the encouragement of her husband (whom she affectionately addresses
throughout as Dafnis).

Anne Bradstreet repeatedly acknowledged her indebtedness to her
father, Thomas Dudley, for virtually everything she knew about the
intellectual life. Her elegy on Dudley contains the clearest statement of
her sentiments toward him:

My mournful mind, sore pressed, in trembling verse
Presents my lamentation at his hearse,
Who was my father, guide, instructor too,
To whom I ought whatever I could do.
Nor is't relation near my hand shall tie;
For who more cause to boast his worth than I?
Who heard or saw, observed or knew him better?
Or who alive than I a greater debtor?27

Bradstreet's early intellectual dependence upon her father was
the first crucial element in the development of her sense of a poetic role:
he introduced her to history, poetry, and science, which were to be her
early interests. His poetry, expressive of a moral vision which she
admired, prompted her to attempt the same. The sense of her mentor's
magnitude created a tension between a desire to emulate and a fear of
intellectual insufficiency, becoming more pronounced as her intellectual
fealty expanded to include du Bartas, Sidney, Sylvester, and Raleigh.
Bradstreet gave succinct expression in a number of places to her internal agitation: she complains of "my ravish't eye, and heart," "my wondring eyes, and envious heart" which she must disappoint with a "falt'ring tongue" and a "weak and wounded braine." In extended passages, the tension between desire and doubt emerges clearly as a feature of her intellectual relationship with her father. In "To Her Most Honoured Father," Bradstreet presents a prospectus of the quaternions, venturing a guess that her treatment of the four elements, humors, ages, and seasons might best that of her father-teacher, but she retreats quickly: "But by my humble hand thus rudely pen'd/ They /h er verses7 are your bounden handmaids to attend." Indeed, Dudley's portrayal of the "four sisters" cannot be surpassed:

Their worth so shines, in those rich lines you show,
Their parallels to find I scarcely know,
To climbe their Climes, I have nor strength, nor skill,
To mount so high, requires an Eagle's quill:
My lowly pen, might wait upon those four,
I bring my four times four, now meanly clad, 31
To do their homage unto yours most glad . . . .

"To Her Most Honoured Father" might appear to be a conventional apology complete with rhetorical one-upmanship (playfully expressed) and feigned humility; yet, Bradstreet reveals a tendency to self-deprecation in other poems, where she is at times even mawkish. In the 1650 version of her elegy on Sidney, the apology vies with praise of Sidney as a major structural element of the poem. Out of approximately one hundred and forty lines, Bradstreet devotes nearly fifty to an excruciating, almost punitive, self-examination:

Fain would I show, how thou fames path didst tread,
But now into such Lab'rinths am I led:
With endless turnes, the way I find not out,
For to persist, my muse is more in doubt:
Call me ambitious fool, that durst aspire,
Enough for me to look, and so admire.
And makes me now with Sylvester confess,
But Sidney's Muse, can sing his worthinesse.
Too late my error see, and durst presume
To fix my faltering lines upon his tomb:
Which are in worth, as far short of his due,
As Vulcan is, of Venus native hue. 33

Once again, the tension between desire and doubt emerges, becoming
a kind of co-topic. The poem lurches toward a conclusion only after
Bradstreet has given a resume of her difficulties in rising to the
occasion of celebrating Sidney's life and works:

Goodwill, did make my headlong pen to run,
Like unwise Phaeton his ill guided sonne,
Till taught to's cost, for his too hasty hand,
He left that charge by Phoebus to be man'd:
So proudly foolish I, with Phaeton strive,
Fame's flaming chariot for to drive.
Till terror-struck for my too weighty charge.
I leave't in brief, Apollo do't at large.
Apollo laught to patch up what's begun,
He bad me drive, and he would hold the Sun . . .
He promised much, but th' muses had no will,
To give their detractor any quill. 34

It is significant that Bradstreet compares herself to Phaeton, for the
image suggests not only "headlong" ambition, but an apprenticeship and
filial dependency—conditions in which the poet feels inadequate. Bradstreet
conveys this self-impression more directly in the elegy on du Bartès:

My muse unto a child I may compare,
Who sees the riches of some famous fair,
He feeds his eyes, but understanding lacks
To comprehend the worth of all those knacks

But seeing empty wishes nought obtain,
At night turns to his mother's cot again,
And tells her tales (his full heart ever-glad)
Of all the glorious sights his eyes have had:
But finds too soon his want of eloquence,
The silly prattler speaks no word of sense;
But seeing utterance fail his great desires,
Sits down in silence, deeply he admires. 35
Turning to address du Bartas directly, Bradstreet utters an emotional confession of profound self-doubt that borders on self-hatred:

A thousand thousand times my senseless senses
Moveless stand charmed by thy sweet influences;
More senseless than the stones to Amphion's lute,
Mine eyes are sightless, and my tongue is mute,
My full astonished heart doth pant to break,
Through grief it wants a faculty to speak....
But wishes can't accomplish my desire,
Pardon if I adore, when I admire.36

Bradstreet's early poems, written in the period of her novitiate in which her teachers and examples of excellence were men, suggest that she felt those giants to be continually looking over her shoulder. In her effort to find her poetic voice, she appears to resent her inability to get out from under her apprenticeship. She blames herself; and the critical and pervasive presence of Thomas Dudley exacerbates her dependency. In an apparent aside to her father at the end of "The Greek Monarchy" (in "The Four Monarchies"), Bradstreet asks that any error be excused since they proceed from "my head, not heart." Intellectual inadequacy, she feels, can thwart her best intentions; Dudley, her exacting reader, will not fail to miss her shortcomings.

In the elegy on her father, Bradstreet describes him as a "whip and maul" to dissenting, referring to his conduct as one of the prosecutors of Hutchinson and the antinomian faction in the late 1630's. Dudley ought not necessarily be thought of as tyrannical in his daughter's case, however; no specific evidence exists for such a conclusion. Bradstreet's admitted inner turmoil points rather to the intellectually confining situation of the aspiring woman poet in the seventeenth century. She cannot hope to equal or surpass the men who have proven themselves as poets. She cannot teach them anything, much less claim them as an audience. The
question she is left with is what to do with the knowledge she has acquired and the desire she still has to write. Nor is Bradstreet alone in this predicament; many of the women poets complained of the same stifling-atmosphere, some more angrily than Bradstreet.

Writing in the latter half of the century, Anne Finch made her frustration the topic of many poems. In "The Apology," she demands to know why women are excluded from the company of poets:

'Tis true I write and tell me by what Rule
I am alone forbid to play the fool
To follow through the Groves a wand'ring Muse . . .
Why sho'd it in my Pen be held a fault
Whilst Mira paints her face, to paint a thought
Whilst Lamia to the manly Bumper flies
And borrow'd Spiritts sparkle in her Eyes
Why sho'd it be in me a thing so vain
To heat with Poetry my colder Brain . . .
Each Woman has her weaknesse; mind indeed
Is still to write tho' hopelesse to succeed . . .

In "The Introduction," Finch states the problem of denial of acceptance with characteristic directness:

Alas! A woman that attempts the pen
Such an intruder on the rights of men,
Such a presumptuous Creature is esteem'd
The fault can by no virtue be redeem'd.
They tell us we mistake our sex and way;
Good breeding, fashion, dancing, dressing, play,
Are the accomplishments we should desire;
To write, or read, or think, or to inquire,
Would cloud our beauty, and exhaust our time,
And interrupt the conquests of our prime,
Whilst the dull manage of a servile house,
Is held by some our utmost art and use.

Writing some eight years after Bradstreet's birth, Rachel Speight's attitude is considerably more lugubrious than the most plaintive of Bradstreet's apologies. Smarting from what was apparently a frigid reception of Mouzell for Melastomus, her response to Swetnam, Speight composed "A Dream," which she affixed to a larger poem entitled
"Mortalities Memorandum." "A Dream" is a kind of allegorical autobiography in which Truth, Knowledge, and Desire vie with Dissuasion to determine the poet's future. What Speight wants is Erudition and the means to express it. Dissuasion argues against the pursuit of Erudition by reminding Speight of the essential limitations of her sex and the tenderness of her age (Speight was only about twenty when she wrote the poem). The poet is instantly dejected:

And as a horse new come into the field,
Who with a Harquebuz at first doth start, 40
So did this shot make me recoyle and yeeld.

Truth comes to Speight's rescue by outreasoning Dissuasion:

Both man and woman of three parts consist,
Which Paul doth bodie, soule, and spirit call:
And from the soule three faculties arise,
The mind, the will, the power; and wherefore shall
A woman haue her intellect in vaine,
Or endeuer Knowledge to attain.

The talent, God doth giue, must be imploy'd,
His owne with vantage he must haue againe;
All parts and faculties were made for use; 41
The God of Knowledge nothing gaue in vaine.

Truth recognizes the implication in Dissuasion's argument, that Speight is united irrevocably to Eve. Enjoined from pursuing knowledge, Eve was fated from the moment of her creation to a life of subjection and servitude; unsavory as this verdict is, Speight seems unable to counter it. But Truth reminds the disputants that women possess intellects and that they have the right and duty to exercise them. Speight then hears an exhortation sounding very much like Satan's seduction speech in the garden, except that it is not spoken by the father or lies, but by Truth herself:

If thou didst know the pleasure of the place,
Where Knowledge growes, and where thou mayst it gaine;
Or rather knew the vertue of the plant,
Thou would'st not grudge at any cost, or paine . . . .
Let not Dissuasion alter thy intent;
'Tis sinne to nippe good motions in the head;
Take courage, and be constant in thy course,
Though irksome be the path, which thou must tread . . . .
True Knowledge is the Window of the soule,
Through which her objects she doth speculate;
It is the mother of faith, hope, and loue;
Without it who can vertue estimate?
By it, in grace thou shalt desire to grow;
'Tis life eternall God and Christ to Know. 42

Speight wrote the poem sometime in 1620; it is perhaps the first
published argument in the seventeenth century for the right of
women to lead lives of the intellect. And yet, women are not finally
triumpant. Speight continues to disclose that after her encouraging
talks with Truth, she ran headlong into Joseph Swetnam whom she describes
as a "full fed Beast,/ Which roared like some monster, or a Deuill,/And on Eue's sex he foamed filthie froth . . . ." Speight feels defeated
("... it seems, my moode out-[ran]/ my might . . . ." ), and she yields
her place to others who would challenge him.

Speight, Bradstreet, and Finch were separated by time, family back-
ground, social class, and geography. Between Bradstreet and Finch were
certainly differences of religious exposure: the alternative to Bradstreet's
poetic life would never have been the pursuit of "fashion, dancing, dressing,
play." And yet, all three women ask the same nagging questions: what to
do with a learned mind and how to make poetry work in the service of truth.
The answer might seem to lie in finding an audience of women. Mary Lee
(Lady Chudleigh) apparently had this in mind when she composed "To the Ladies":

Wife and servant are the same,
But only differ in the name,
For when that fatal knot is tied,
Which nothing, nothing can divide,
When she the word obey has said,
And man by law supreme is made,
Then all that's kind is laid aside,
And nothing left but state and pride. 45
Lee continues to describe the condition of women in marriage as irksome, and the poem concludes with the advice not to marry:

> Then shun, oh! shun that wretched state,
> And all the fawning flatterers hate;
> Value yourselves, and men despise,
> You must be Proud, if you'll be wise. 46

Other women, like Katherine Philips (the "Matchless Orinda"), cultivated male and female friendships. For Philips, these provided subject matter and an audience, as well as the opportunity to argue her favorite themes: the distinction between spiritual and erotic love, and the superiority of friendship over marriage. A pervasive notion in Philips' verse is women's capacity to enjoy genuine friendship and a life of the intellect.

The most common direction the women take, however, is to turn their voices inward, and their verses frequently communicate the desperate sense that these women feel enclosed in an echo chamber. As Finch explained, one wrote for oneself when the possibility to join the company of poets was foreclosed. This is not necessarily a happy conclusion that the women draw: their forced intellectual retirement often becomes a source of self-recrimination, bitterness, and defensiveness which is then transferred to poetry as subject matter and point of view. "The Prologue" is an excellent illustration of the difficult accommodation that Bradstreet made to the poetic hegemony of men (what Carew called the "delphique quire"). The poem turns upon a consideration of the inadequacy of art when it is unaccompanied by natural ability. Throughout "The Prologue," Bradstreet exhibits a characteristic self-effacement; but in the course of the poem, the mood changes from controlled unrest, to righteous anger, to reluctant acquiescence.
Bradstreet begins by stating her inferiority to the great poets and historians who "sing of Wars, of Captains, and of Kings,/ Of cities founded, Commonwealth's begun." She gives the impression that she is content to range in another, less grandiose territory; yet, she then admits that du Bartas is the object of her intense envy. Du Bartas of the "sugar'd lines" possesses natural talent which art has enhanced. Hence, he is one of the "high flown quils, that soare the skies." On the other hand, she sees herself to be poorly equipped for poetry, a condition that no amount of art can remedy. She is willing to accept her "simple skills" and her obscure fate, but she still feels the surge of desire to write great verse. Even Homer, the "fluent sweet tongued Greek," received a "full requitall of his striving paine." Art served his talent, implying that he must have had a period of apprenticeship; Bradstreet says that eventually he ceased to "lisp" and to "speake afterward more plaine." Still, Bradstreet decides that in her case, "A weake or wounded braine admits no cure."

Up to this point in stanza four, her self-comparison to Homer and du Bartas expresses a feeling of individual inadequacy before the overwhelming "presence" of revered masters. But in stanza five, Bradstreet explodes in angry protest:

I am obnoxious to each carping tongue,
Who sayes, my hand a needle better fits,
A Poets Pen, all scorne, I should thus wrong;
For such despight they cast on female wits:
If what I doe prove well, it wo'nt advance,
They'll say its stolne, or else, it was by chance.

Bradstreet gives the impression that in an instant of blinding epiphany, she has made the connection that her self-doubt and diminished prospects are actually grounded in a larger ideological context, to which
she was previously oblivious. Not individual at all, the conflict between her striving pain and her inability to quench it has its roots in the "natural" differences between male and female which men have used against women who attempt to flex their intellect and imagination. The brilliant flare of recognition consumes itself in stanza five, for Bradstreet cannot gainsay the tradition that grants preeminence to men. The most she can hope for is a little room for women--and for herself--to write:

Preeminence in each, and all is yours,  
Yet grant some small acknowledgement of ours... 
Give wholesome Parsely, I ask no Bayes:  
This mean and unrefined stuffe of mine, 
Will make your glistening gold but to shine.49

Virginia Woolf identified women's anger such as Bradstreet vents in "The Prologue," as the product of a "harrassed and distracted imagination."50 Isolation and anger, said Woolf present an "impediment to incandescence" when feelings of isolation and anger take control of the poet's primary subject matter. Bradstreet's first version of the elegy on Sidney gives clear testimony to the validity of Woolf's observations. But Bradstreet also shows that anger can be successfully harnessed into a structure, that it can be controlled to achieve a persuasive effect. The elegy on Queen Elizabeth is remarkable not simply because of its triumphant defense of women but because it moves so well toward a resolution. The fundamental "grudge" that Bradstreet expressed in "The Prologue"--that men tyrannize women--is present here, but it is shaped by her specific historical illustration. Bradstreet refutes the notion of male preeminence--and this is the only poem in her canon in which she does this--by presenting the case of Queen Elizabeth: doubts abound about women's ability, yet the facts of Elizabeth's reign overturn them all.
Before men set out to impugn women, Bradstreet argues, they had better take a careful look at English history.

The elegy consists of four parts: a "proem," the poem itself, and two epitaphs. In the proem, Bradstreet's tone is one of reverence bordering on worship. She addresses the dead queen directly, including her voice among the myriad tributes surrounding the queen's hearse:

So great's thy glory and thine excellence,  
The sound thereof raps every human sense,  
That men account it no impiety,  
To say thou wert a fleshly deity. . . .  
Thou never didst nor canst' thou now disdain  
T' accept the tribute of a loyal brain. . . .  
Which makes me deem my rudeness is no wrong,  
Though I resound thy praises 'mootst the throng.52

Having completed her initial tribute, Bradstreet then turns to render a retrospective of Elizabeth's reign. Men are her audience here, and her tone hardens into the trenchancy of a relentless trial lawyer as she recounts the long list of spectacular accomplishments:

Was ever people better ruled then here?  
Was ever land more happy freed from stirs?  
Did ever wealth in England more abound?  
Her victories in foreign coasts resound... . 53

Elizabeth outclasses all of history's women monarchs combined, being greater than Semiramis, Dido, Cleopatra, and Zenobia. In the epitaphs, Bradstreet offers her final tribute to the queen; Elizabeth is a "damask rose, spring from the white and red," and she is the "envied yet unparalleled prince."54

The vigor of the elegy on Elizabeth lies in Bradstreet's skillful blend of the litany and the rhetorical questions. The effect that she achieves in her male audience is the kindling of national pride by means of a recollection of historical facts. Men have to assent to the truth, according to Bradstreet, that England enjoyed its halcyon days under a
That single point disarms Bradstreet's antagonists of a rejoinder ("She's argument enough to make you mute"), permitting her the coup de grace:

Now say, have women worth? or have they none?  
Or that they some, but with our Queen is't gone?  
Nay masculines, you have thus taxed us long,  
But she, though dead, will vindicate our wrong.  
Let such as say our sex is void of reason,  
Know 'tis slander now but once was treason. . . .  
If then new things their old forms shall retain,  
Eliza shall rule Albion once again.

In the elegy on Elizabeth, Bradstreet uses history to suspend the law of male preeminence. For a momentous span of time, a woman ruled men and the result was domestic peace and an increase in England's prestige as a world power. No seventeenth-century patriot could wish for more.

For Bradstreet, Elizabeth was an epic figure to whom poets and historians--including herself--must ever fail to pay adequate homage.

But in this instance, Bradstreet has used her own erudition in the service of an important truth: the undisputed golden age of England came about through a woman, and her conduct exonerates all women. Thus, Bradstreet transforms her anger into rejoicing:

Here lies the pride of queens, pattern of kings.  
So blaze it, Fame, her's feathers for thy wings.  
Here lies the envied, yet unparalleled prince,  
Whose living virtues speak (though dead long since).  
If many worlds, as that fantastic framed,  
In every one be her great glory famed.

Exactly what prompted Bradstreet to write the elegy on Elizabeth is a matter of speculation, and she did not compose anything quite like it again. The arch aggressiveness of Bradstreet's tone would suggest, however, that Puritanism (with its strict reliance on the biblical definition of gender roles) did little to support women who aspired to untraditional roles. One pastor at Newbury, Thomas Parker, told his sister
in 1650 that "your printing of a Book, beyond the custom of your sex, doth rankly smell." John Winthrop's opinion of women writers was less caustic but no less negative, as the following entry in his journal illustrates:

Mr. Hopkins, the governor of Hartford upon Connecticut, came to Boston, and brought his wife with him, (a godly young woman, and of special parts [a reference to her beauty, perhaps] who was fallen into a sad infirmity, the loss of her understanding and reason, which had been growing upon her diverse years, by occasion of her giving herself wholly to reading and writing, and had written many books. Her husband, being very loving and tender of her, was loath to grieve her; but he saw his error, when it was too late. For if she had attended her household affaires, and such things as belong to women, and not gone out of her way and calling to meddle in such things as are proper for men, whose minds are stronger, etc., she had kept her wits, and might have improved them usefully and honorably in the place God had set her. He brought her to Boston, and left her with her brother, one Mr. Yale, a merchant, to try what means might be had for her here. But no help could be had.

Winthrop's diagnosis of Anne Hopkins' emotional distress has the ominous ring of comparison to Eve's role in the fall. Hopkins, abetted by her uxorious spouse, repudiated her essential nature and acted the man. A woman could pay a very high price for stepping out of the conventional roles assigned by God to her sex. Winthrop emphasizes the effects of such defiance, perhaps as a fatherly admonition to other women.

If one marvels that Bradstreet should have been published at all in such an environment, one has only to open The Tenth Muse to read John Woodbridge's testimonial in his prefatory epistle and commendatory poem. Bradstreet's brother-in-law and a pastor himself, Woodbridge genuinely liked what he read in manuscript and decided that it ought to be printed. He was another sympathetic man in the poet's life; but in presenting Bradstreet to the reading public, he was
sensitive to certain taboos. A woman must not be proud nor must she allow anything to interfere with her wifely responsibilities. At the same time, he must not appear to be overly fond either of the woman in question or of her accomplishment.

Woodbridge had to show that the poet had not coerced him; he therefore emphasizes her humility and reticence, appropriate qualities in a woman:

If you shall think it will be to your shame
to be in print, then I must bear the blame;
If't be a fault, 'tis mine, 'tis shame that might
Deny so fair an infant of its right
To look abroad; I know your modest mind,
How you will blush, complain, 'tis too unkind:
To force a woman's birth, provoke her pain,
Expose her labours to the world's disdain.
I know you'll say, you defy that mint,
That stamped you thus, to be a fool in print. 62

He also had to demonstrate that writing had not detracted from Bradstreet's faithful performance of her duties as a homemaker and that she enjoyed the respectability due a Puritan matron:

[The Tenth Muse] is the work of a woman, honoured, and esteemed where she lives, for her gracious demeanor, her eminent parts, her pious conversation, her courteous disposition, her exact diligence in her place, and discreet managing of her family occasions, and more than so, these poems are the fruit but of some few hours, curtailed from her sleep and other refreshments. 63

Finally, Woodbridge deftly circumvents the possibility of being seen as doting while he continues to praise her:

But lest I should exceed, and too much love,
Should too much endeared affection move,
To super-add in praises, I shall cease,
Lest while I please myself I should displease
The longing reader, who may chance to complain,
And so requite my love with deep disdain;
That I you silly servant stand in the porch,
Lighting your sunlight, with my blinking torch ... 64
Woodbridge's unctuous remarks render him rather effective in public relations, but the "packaging" of Anne Bradstreet suggests the sort of resistance in the community that had to be neutralized—or at least tempered—in order for a woman poet to be accepted. Woodbridge presents Bradstreet precisely on the grounds that she was a curiosity, a paradox: she was a woman poet, and a good one besides. That her virtues had not been compromised, however, was as an important an angle as the intrinsic worth of her writing. In fairness, it must be said that Woodbridge's praise is sincere (he says, for example, that the shortcomings of other women writers are "the person's, not the sexes failing"65). But he is also careful to say that Bradstreet's creative gift only seems to surpass that of men—an impression given, he confesses, by his own shortcomings in writing the prefatory remarks. Bradstreet is to be ultimately compared to other women writers, over whom she has clear superiority.

It is apparent from Bradstreet's case that considerations of artistic value were preceded and qualified by considerations of gender. Like Carew's recommendation of Donne, the commendatory verses in addition to Woodbridge's indicate the degree to which gender and creativity were linked in the seventeenth century. Nathaniel Ward admits to surprise that Bradstreet experimented in the "male" genres. Keeping in mind that Bradstreet was about thirty-eight years old in 1650, one gets the sense that Ward's remarks smack as much of condescension as praise:

I muse whither at length these girls will go;
It half revives my chill frost-bitten blood,
To see a woman once do ought that's good;
And shod by Chaucer's boots, and Homer's furs,
Let men look to 't, lest women wear the spurs. 66
"R. Q." is somewhat more cynical:

Arm, arm, soldados, arm; horse,
Horse, speed your horses;
Gentle-women, make head, they vent
Their plots in verses;
They write of monarchies, a most seditious word,
It signifies oppression, tyranny, sword:
March amain to London, they'll rise, for there they flock,
But stay awhile, they seldom rise till ten o'clock.

In Bradstreet's case, gender presented a woman with a unique problem: she might be heard (once her moral integrity was established), but not taken seriously. Anticipating the problem, "B. W." castigates the men:

Mankind take some blushes on the score;
Monopolize perfection no more;
In your own arts, confess yourselves outdone,
The moon hath totally eclipsed the sun,
Not with her sable mantle muffling him;
But her bright silver makes his gold look dim . . .

and "C. B." attacks the tradition of male hostility to female encroachment in art:

False fame, belie their sex nor more, it can
Surpass, or parallel, the best of man.

Women writers were controversial both in the general context of seventeenth-century perceptions of gender roles and in the particular Puritan context which appropriated those perceptions. Aware that they faced hostile reaction to their poetic efforts, but facing it nonetheless, the women often expressed a sense of isolation and anger. Bradstreet, who never expected to be published but who frequently voiced a desire to write learned poetry, eventually discovered her purpose in reporting her responses to every-day occurrences. When she was not under the spell of du Bartas, Sidney, and the others, she was more controlled and single-minded. Her revisions (published with the new verse in Several Poems in
1678) suggest a transformation as the result of having exorcised those early demons (although they were replaced by others). First, much of the maudlin self-pity is missing in the 1678 version of the elegy on Sidney; in particular, the comparison to Phaeton (which alone took up twenty lines) has been entirely excised. Bradstreet's apology, therefore, reads more conventionally and her description of the altercation with the muses reveals an unencumbered sense of humor. To "The Four Monarchies" Bradstreet added a second apology which she appended to the end of the section on the Roman empire. Here, she accounts generally for the history of composition of her lengthy verse history. She says that many years (as many as twenty-five) intervened between her treatment of the first three monarchies and the last. During this time, she experienced discouragement, illness, and a fire that destroyed her manuscripts, including those of poems she was more proud of. What is significant is the sense she has of her accomplishment over the long haul. Her life as a Puritan wife and mother finally presented more workable topics than had the "sugar'd" lines of du Bartas, Raleigh, or Sylvester. Her concentration upon more private topics represented perhaps an inevitable compromise with her early and enthusiastic desire to write learned verse.
NOTES

2 Gilbert and Gubar, p. 6.
4 Quoted in Gilbert and Gubar, p. 4.
5 Gilbert and Gubar, p. 4.
7 Carew, p. 173.
8 Carew, p. 174.
9 Carew, p. 174.
10 Carew, p. 174.
11 Carew, p. 174.
13 Ben Jonson, Timber, quoted in Tayler, p. 5.
   Two of far nobler shape erect and tall,
   Godlike erect, with native Honour clad
   IN naked majestie seemed Lords of all,
   And worthie seemd, for in thir looks Divine
   The image of thir glorious Maker shon,
Truth, Wisdom, SAncitude severe and pure,
Severe, but in true filial freedom plac't;
Whence true auctoritie in men; though both
Not equal, as thir sex not equal seem'd;
For contemplation he and valour formd,
For softness she and sweet attractive Grace,
Hee for God only, she for God in him ....

P. L., IV, 300ff.

P. L., IV, 635.


P. L., VIII, 530-35; 554-55:
here passion first I felt,
Commotion strange, in all enjoyments else
Superiour and ummov'd, here only weak
Against the charm of Beauties powerful glance.
Or Nature fail'd in mee, and left some part
Not proof enough such Object to sustain

Authority and Reason on her Wait
As one intended first, not after made ....


P. L., VIII, 540-53:

For well I understand in the prime end
Of Nature her th' inferiour, in the mind
And inward Faculties, which most excell,
In outward also her resembling less
His Image who made both, less expressing
The character of that Dominion giv'n
Oe'r other Creatures; yet when I approach
Her loveliness, so absolute she seems
And in her self compleat, so well to know
Her own, that what she will to do or say,
Seems wisest, vertuouest, discreetest, best;
All higher knowledge in her presence fails
Degraded, Wisdom in discourse with her
Looses discount'nanc't, and like folly shews ....

P. L., IX, 999.


Rachel Speight, *A Mouzell for Melastomus* (London: Thomas Archer, 1617), responded to Joseph Swetnam, *The Arraignment of Lewde, Idle, Froward, and Unconstant Women* (London, 1615). Swetnam's scathing satire, aimed at entertaining young men at the expense of women, made use of the traditional opinion that women were proud, vain, and manipulative. Women were so incorrigible, according to Swetnam, that they were "better lost than found, better forsaken than taken". Swetnam advised the would-be groom to choose a woman neither "fair nor foul, rich nor poor," the better to control her. A perfect wife was obedient, submissive, and quiet. After his general indictment of women, Swetnam professed to have respect for the few who were virtuous, and in the end he paid tribute to the suffering of women in pregnancy and childbirth: "Among all the creatures that God created, there is none more subject to misery than a woman, especially those that are fruitful to beare children, for they have scarce a moneths rest in a whole yeare, but are continually overcome with paine, sorrow, and feare, as indeed the dangers of child-bearing must needs be a great terror to a woman which are accounted weake vessels, in respect of men, and yet it is supposed that there is no disease that a man indureth, that is one halfe so grievous or paineful as child-bearing is to a woman; Let it be a toothe-ache, goute or collick, nay if a man had all these at once, yet nothing comparable to a woman's paine in her travaile with child".

Speight's response is interesting on two counts. First, she reinterprets the Genesis account of Eve's creation and mankind's fall from grace. Not created to serve Adam, Eve was intended by God to perfect him. Adam was created from the earth, but Eve was made from perfect human flesh. Eve's first purpose was the service of God, so that enjoyed an individual relationship with God that preceded her role as Adam's consort. Eve sinned first because she was deceived, but Adam cooperated in full knowledge of the consequences. Had he not consented, says Speight, mankind might still enjoy an original purity and happiness; thus Adam's offense was more grievous than Eve's. The second important argument that Speight makes is that women are equal to men: "Eve was not produced from Adam's foote, to be his lowe inferiour; nor from his head to be his superiour, but from his side, neare to his heart, to be his equal; that where he is Lord, she may be Lady: and therefore saith God concerning man and woman jointly, Let them rule over the fish of the Sea, and over the foules of the Heaven, and over every beast that moueth upon the earth: By which words he makes their authority equall, and all creatures to be in subiection unto them both". Accordingly, a husband should not lord it over his wife, but ought rather to share in the household and child-rearing duties. And a woman, to whom God gave an intellect, has a responsibility to learn as much as possible and to use it for the glory of God and the good of man.

The *Mouzell for Melastomus* together with the "Dream" in *Mortalities Memorandum* was likely the first published radical defense of women's right to equality in the seventeenth century, and they were both written by a young woman not older than twenty.


"To the Memory of my dear and ever honoured Father," p. 165.
Thomas Dudley's poem is unfortunately not extant, making impossible an evaluation of Bradstreet's treatment of the same material.


"To her most Honoured Father," p. 5

"To her most Honoured Father," p. 5.

Mention has already been made in the preceding chapter concerning McElrath's reservation about the revisions. This dissertation proceeds on the assumption that Bradstreet was responsible for the alterations that appeared in the second volume of her verse in 1678, since no incontrovertible evidence exists to prove otherwise.

"An Elegy upon that Honourable and renowned Knight, Sir Philip Sidney," p. 151.


Speight, Mortalities Memorandum, with a Dreame Prefixed (London: Jacob Bloome, 1621).

Mortalities Memorandum, p. 4.

Mortalities Memorandum, p. 5.

Mortalities Memorandum, pp. 6-7, 8.

Mortalities Memorandum, p. 9.

Mortalities Memorandum, p. 9:


Lee, pp. 71-74.

In a recent article, Jane Donohue Eberwein proposes that Bradstreet's tone throughout "The Prologue" is ironic. Eberwein sees feigned humility in stanzas one through four which leads up to the "joke" in stanzas five and six. Bradstreet does not think men have preeminence in all, says Eberwein, for that would mean a literal superiority in every act, including childbirth. Eberwein sees Bradstreet's capitulation to be a ploy to reduce male claims to absurdity. The final twist comes at the end of the poem, according to Eberwein, when Bradstreet asks for parsley rather than the bays: parsley was a symbol among the ancient Greeks for physical prowess and victory. Eberwein says, "Bradstreet contrived to sound meek and vulnerable, even in the act of choosing among crowns" (26); what the poet did, in effect, was to assert a kind of female superiority, after all. See Eberwein, "No Rhet'ric We Expect': Argumentation in Bradstreet's 'The Prologue,' Early American Literature, 16 (Spring 1981), pp. 19-26.

Woolf, pp. 61ff.
"In Honour of that High and Mighty Princess Queen Elizabeth," p. 155.
"In Honour of . . . Queen Elizabeth," p. 156.
"In Honour of . . . Queen Elizabeth," p. 156.
John Aylmer (An Harborowe for Faithful and Trewe Subjects, 1559) indicated that when a woman succeeded to the head of state, she lawfully ruled even her own husband, except in matters concerning their married life; yet, her husband could not lawfully exercise his marital prerogative to prevent his wife from ascending the throne, since the latter would be her right of inheritance and since the rule of a commonwealth was the highest duty.
"In Honour of . . . Queen Elizabeth," p. 158.
Ann Stanford (Anne Bradstreet: the Worldly Puritan) asserts that Bradstreet was incensed by Sylvester's elegy in honor of James I, which relegated Elizabeth to an inferior place in history. Bradstreet's frequent allusions to the Phoenix, an image that Sylvester used, corroborates this argument. It is also apparent from Bradstreet's language in the epitaphs, that she read the 1635 edition of Camden's (Elizabeth's first biographer) history of Elizabeth's reign. His description of the queen as a "Princess
of immortal fame, the admiration of her sexe, the helper of all nations, the patterne of Princes, the delight of her people, and the terour of her enemies, borne to wear a temporal Crowne upon the earth, and to be crowned with eternal glory in heaven" (B3r'), compares very closely with Bradstreet's tribute. Yet, Sylvester's tone seems hardly irritatin g enough to warrant Bradstreet's forceful rebuttal. Written during the turbulent reign of Charles I, the elegy may have been inspired by the intense debate about the monarchy and the future of England under the Stuarts--a debate that Bradstreet certainly would have heard, although not likely participated in. Elizabeth had been a monarch whom the Massachusetts Bay settlers fondly recalled; but given the controversial nature of rule by women, it is conceivable that this general topic was debated as well, and that the most famous argument against women's rule--John Knox's First Blast of the Trumpet, 1558--was recalled. Knox, a fervent separatist and revolutionary (he had advocated in the tract that Mary Tudor be overthrown) and also an intimate colleague of John Calvin, denied the right of women to hold power. Knox cited the biblical account of Eve's role in the fall, as well as the "natural" inferiority of women, to prove that women's rule was "repugnant to nature, contumelie to God, a thing most contrarious to his reveled will and approued ordinance, and finallie it is the subuersion of good order, of all equitie and justic" (p. 11). Appearing exactly at the point that Elizabeth ascended the throne, Knox was threatened with charges of treason, and this may have been what Bradstreet had in mind in the lines, "Let such, as say our sex is void of reason;/ Know 'tis a slander now, but once was treason" (p.157). John Calvin was so appalled at Knox's temerity, that he disavowed the opinions in First Blast, without completely abandoning the general idea that women were less intellectually capable to rule than men. And Aylmer's essay, aimed at neutralizing the controversy, also upheld the notion of women's intrinsic weakness at the same time that it support a women's right of inheritance to the head of state. Bradstreet's arguments seem more directed at this sort of debate than they seem a response only to Sylvester's fulsome praise of James.

60 Quoted in Koehler, p. 31. Wendy Martin also notes this, pp. 19-31.
62 John Woodbridge, "To my dear Sister, the Author of these Pomes," p. 527.
63 Woodbridge, [Epistle to the Reader], pp. 525-26.
64 Woodbridge, "To my dear Sister," p. 528.
65 Woodbridge, "To my dear Sister," p. 527.
66 Nathaniel Ward, [commendatory poem], p. 530.
67 R. Q., [commendatory poem], quoted in its entirety, p.529.
68

69
CHAPTER THREE

City of God, City of Man: Bradstreet's "Histories" and the Puritan Errand

Of all the verse that Anne Bradstreet wrote, perhaps the most ignored and the least compelling to the twentieth century reader are her history poems, "A Dialogue Between Old England and New" (1642), "The Four Monarchies" (1643-47), and "David's Lamentation for Saul and Jonathan" (1649). "The Four Monarchies," especially, is notorious for its length, clumsiness, and lack of original thought. A metrical review of about fifteen hundred years of ancient history in about as many oddly shaped iambic pentameter couplets, "The Four Monarchies" is panned by even Bradstreet's staunchest critical allies. Josephine Piercy calls it "the work of a novice... bogged down under the strain of the gigantic task" she undertook. Elizabeth Wade White terms "The Four Monarchies" the poet's "longest and most ambitious composition," an ill-fated attempt to write an epic poem. Bradstreet herself feared that she was in serious trouble; in an apology she appended to the "Grecian Monarchy," she confessed:

My tired braine, leaves to a better pen,
This taske befits not women, like to men:
For what is past I blush, excuse to make,
But humbly stand, some grave reproofe to take:
Pardon to crave, for errours, is but vaine,
The subject was too high, beyond my straine;
To frame Apologie for some offense,
Converts our boldnesse, into impudence.
This is my presumption (some now) to requite,
Ne sutor ultra crepidam, may write.

Bradstreet's statements are revealing. She implies once again her sense of captivity in an unending and agonizing apprenticeship, something
that she has suggested before in the poems that point out a link between her personal misgivings and the public ideology of male preeminence. She also conveys the impression that she deserves punishment for having attempted a man's work and for having failed in the attempt; indeed, failure is part of the punishment. Finally, she appears convinced that she is incompetent altogether. Borrowing Nathaniel Ward's tongue-in-cheek aphorism (which he borrowed from classical literature), Bradstreet says that she is a cobbler rather than a poet. In placing this description at the end of a long expression of self-abasement, Bradstreet imbues Ward's originally comic self-criticism with darker tones. Yet Bradstreet accomplished something unique: she wrote when no other New England woman engaged herself in writing verse history. In choosing such a genre, Bradstreet adopted the most public of voices; along with the preachers of jeremiads—the political sermons which figured greatly in Puritan prose and verse historiography—Bradstreet interpreted history and exhorted her audience to action. In short, the verse historian was both teacher and preacher, roles clearly outside the purview of women in seventeenth-century New England. History, like poetry, was a species of rhetoric having a didactic purpose: to teach men how to conduct virtuous lives, make moral judgments, and rule commonwealths. This traditional view persisted despite the inroads of "secular" historiographerers like Francis Bacon who distinguished between public and private morality in history's great figures.

The questions that are proper to ask about Bradstreet's historical verse therefore, range beyond ones of technique or expertise to ones about
intention and point of view. What stimulated Bradstreet to attempt
the "male" genre, and what did she accomplish over the ten year period
in which history was her overwhelming interest? Is her point of view
consistent throughout the period? Is it consonant with that of
concurrent New England Puritan historians? These are the sorts of
questions that major scholars like Perry Miller and Sacvan Bercovitch
have asked about lesser known persons than Bradstreet, as well as
about Puritan New England's stellar characters. Curiously, Bradstreet
has been found worthy of little more than a passing comment in the work
of these scholars. The heuristic approach that first led Miller, and now
Bercovitch, to focus upon the central myth of the "errand into the
wilderness" and which opened seventeenth-century New England to sociological
and psychological, as well as literary and historical, investigation ought
now to include Bradstreet. In the course of the 1640's, she appeared to
express a somewhat different attitude about the myth, and any account of
the development and mutations of the Puritan notion of "errand" is
incomplete without an examination of her historical verse.

We must first note that Bradstreet composed her historical poems
during a period when England was embroiled in civil war and when New England
Puritans seriously entertained the possibility that the special religious
and civil forms of government they had worked out would be translated
to the homeland. While Bradstreet was writing her historical verse,
Edward Johnson expressed in prophetic terms this hope of the settlers:

and now all you whose affections are taken with wonderfull
matters (Attend) and you that thinke Christ hath forgotten
his poore despised people (Behold) and all you that hopefully
long for Christs appearing to confound Antichrist (Consider)
and rejoyce all yee his Churches the World throughout, for
the Lambe is preparing his Bride, and oh! yee the antient
and Beloved of Christ, whom he of old led by the hand from
Egypt to Canaan, through that great and terrible Wilderness,
tooke here, behold him whom you have peirced [sic], preparing
to peirce your hearts with his Wonder-Working Providence, and
to provoke you by his little handfull of his people to tooke
on him, and mourn. Yet let no man think these few weake
Wormes would restraine the wonderfull Workes of Christ; as
onely to themselves, but the quite contrary, these [are]
but the Porch of his glorious building in hand, and ifhee
have shewed such admirable acts of his providence toward
these, what will he doe when the whole Nation of English
shall set upon Reformation according to the direct Rule of
his Word? Assured confidence there is also for all Nations,
from the undoubted promise of Christ himself.

Throughout Wonder-Working Providence, Johnson suggests the mutual
connectedness of England and New England, to which he gives an apocalyptic
exegesis, although his main purpose is to narrate the events of New
England's foundation and growth.

The intensity of religious and political ferment in the 1640's
was one factor that prompted Edward Johnson and Anne Bradstreet to write.
One had the sense that something momentous was happening; New England
Puritans firmly believed that their cause would triumph, but there was always
the danger of failure if they were in any way perfidious to God's laws.
Another factor was the Puritan insistence on public witness: declaration
of faith and renunciation of sin was a ritual antecedent to church
membership. Johnson's Wonder-Working Providence has the tone of public
testimony, as does Bradstreet's "A Dialogue Between Old England and New."
This quality would be in keeping with the general purposes of history,
whether prose (as in Johnson's case) or verse, as interpretative and
exhortative. In chronicling the Massachusetts project from its inception
in England, and by saturating his narrative with biblical typological
language, Johnson expressed his own faith as much as he told a story.
Because women, however, did not customarily join in the ritualized public witness (since they were forbidden to declaim in the churches) Bradstreet's public voice is all the more surprising, and all the more heroic for her having overcome "feminine" reticence. A learned mind and a desire "to declare the Truth and to set forth . . . the Glory of God" compel her to write.

"A Dialogue Between Old England and New," "The Four Monarchies," and "David's Lamentation for Saul and Jonathan" demonstrate Bradstreet's interest in defining the significance of current events, a purpose that is achieved when the present is examined in the context of salvation history and providential history. Each poem differs from the others in structure and point of view; but all of them center on the interplay of divine and human will, an issue that underpinned the universal histories of the middle ages and Renaissance, and that lay at the heart of the concept of the errand. Bradstreet takes for granted the scholastic notion of God as the first cause of history who works through second causes and occasionally by direct intervention. In the history verse, she offers her judgments about mankind's efforts up to the present to exert an ameliorative effect upon human life. Bradstreet does not work out an original theory of history, however: her poems contain her responses to specific events, and in disclosing her point of view, she has recourse to conventional ideas about history and human nature. Nonetheless, her attitude over the long haul is markedly less progressive and optimistic than Johnson's, presenting, in effect, an alternative view of the Puritan errand.

Bradstreet likely wrote "A Dialogue" sometime after August 22, 1642, as indicated by the lines, "They worded it so long they fell to blows,/
That thousands lay on heaps, here bleeds my woes,
I that no warres
so many yeares have known,
Am now destroy'd . . . "

The poem is ostensibly an allegorization of the issue of New England's responsibility to the motherland. Allegory is a convention that Bradstreet used elsewhere in describing the elements, humors, and ages; but "A Dialogue" is actually a structurally complex and thematically dense poem in which Bradstreet makes skillful use of her favorite techniques. There is the dramatic confrontation between two personae (without intervention by a narrator) that forms the overarching framework and which lays out the argument incrementally until the major statement of purpose at the end. There is also the sequence of rhetorical questions, completely suitable in a dramatic monologue, which allows Bradstreet to communicate essential background material without sounding bookish. What is especially noteworthy is Bradstreet's conflation of two compatible sets of images and crossing of them to create an ironic reversal: mother and daughter—that is, "Old England" and "New England"—are patient and physician, respectively. Biological dependence does not necessarily imply moral immaturity; one might say, revising a nineteenth-century poetic observation, that Bradstreet shows the child to be the mother of the woman.

The poem consists of three exchanges of dialogue between "Old England" and "New England" and a final address by the latter. Forward movement in the dialogue occurs in "Old England"'s gradual coming to self-knowledge by means of confession and repentance. Here Bradstreet makes use of the Puritan pattern of conversion which takes place as a spiritual awakening and a public declaration before the saints (in this case, "New England") of one's innate depravity and God's merciful forgiveness. Bradstreet implies
that... this pattern of personal justification works as well on the larger stage of history and politics. England will fulfill its destiny once it can get beyond its sins; in order to do this, England must delve into its history for the full account of its transgressions. "New England," already justified, offers a sympathetic ear, heartfelt prayers, and a prophecy of future glory.

In the first exchange, "New England" comes upon "Old England" slumped in physical and spiritual torpor. This image contrasts sharply with "New England"'s recollection of the past "glories of England's ever famous Realme." Horror stricken and confused, "New England" asks her mother for the cause of her present condition and receives an acerbic answer:

Art ignorant indeed, of these my woes? . . .
And thou a childe, a Limbe, and dost not feele
My weakned fainting body now to reele?
This Phisick-purging-potion I have taken,
Will bring Consumption, or an Ague quaking,
Unlesse some Cordial thou fetch from high.
Which present help may ease this malady.
If I decease, dost think thou shalt survive?
Or by my wasting state, dost think to thrive? 18

Here, Bradstreet's comingling of the mother-daughter-patient-physician images has a pointed effect. Clearly a mouthpiece for the Puritan version of history, "Old England" suggests the pervasively held opinion that New England, as of 1642, was still in an embryonic state of becoming, still bound by an umbilicus of blood and faith to England—in short, that the people of Massachusetts were still English. Of a more bellicose mind, Edward Johnson suggests much the same in the opening chapters of Wonder-Working Providence (these chapters written circa 1641-42, describing the early years of departure and plantation):
When England began to decline in Religion, like luke-warmed Laodicea, Christ the glorious King of his Churches, raises an Army out of our English Nation, for freeing his people from their long servitude under usurping Prelacy; and . . . Christ creates a New England to muster up the first of his forces in . . . Christ Jesus intending to manifest his Kingly Office toward his Churches more fully than ever yet the Sons of men saw . . . begins with our English Nation . . .

At the same time, "Old England" turns to her daughter for a cure. In the second, and more lengthy exchange, Bradstreet introduces some of the specific ailments plaguing Old England. Like a skillful diagnostician, "New England" must know the symptoms before prescribing a therapy; her inquiry takes the form of a sweeping review of English history.

The string of rhetorical questions reduces the possibilities to two: "Old England" suffers either from the wounds of war (foreign and domestic, from the Saxon and Norman invasion to the Yorkist-Lancastrian wars to the attempted invasion by Spain) or from natural calamities (drought, famine, or pestilence). "New England" asks whether the present disease bears any symptomatic resemblance to those of the past. "Old England" replies affirmatively and from history she adds considerable detail of her own. History, like memory, provides a means of organizing and ultimately understanding the present. For the first time, "Old England" sees a pattern in past afflictions which might have a bearing on her present distress:

They're for my punishments ordain'd on high . . .
Before I tell the effect, ile show the cause, 20
Which are my Sins, the breach of sacred Lawes.

"Old England"'s sins were no less than repeated rejection of opportunities to reform the church:

Idolatry, supplanter of a Nation,
With foolish superstitions adoration;
And lik'd, and countenanc'd by men of might,
The Gospel is trod down, and hath no right;  
Church offices are sold, and bought, for gain,  
That Pope, had hope, to find Rome here again  
and the persecution of her prophets, the Puritans:

And thou, poore soule, wast jeer'd among the rest,  
Thy flying for the Truth I made a jeast . . .  
I mock't the Preachers, put it farre away;  
The Sermons yet upon record doe stand,  
That cry'd, destruction to my wicked Land . . .  
My heart obdurate, stood not yet aghast.  
Nor sipt I of that cup, and just 't may be,  
The bottom dregs reserved are fore me.  

"Old England" at last realizes that her disobedience to God has 
disastrous effects in history. God exerts his will to redeem the world 
within secular time, and resistance to his will results in war, famine,  
plague, drought. Having come this far in the conversion process, "Old  
England" moves to a consideration of contemporary events. In the third  
exchange between them, "New England" confirms what is, in effect,  
"Old England"'s correct self-diagnosis. She reaffirms her bond of  
blood and faith to her mother, and in a gesture of affection and kinship,  
takes her mother's hands as the latter begins the last phase of her  
confession. This consists of a description of the events leading up  
to the battle of Edgehill on August 22, 1642: Strafford, the king's  
favorite, has been executed; Archbishop Laud is in prison; Charles  
has fled to York, and now Parliament and the king are in armed conflict.  
The crux of the problem as "Old England" sees it, is the "question of  
state,/ Which is the chief, the law, or else the King,/ One saith it is  
he, the other no such thing," 23 "Old England" inclines toward the  
Parliamentary side and she recognizes the overall significance of this  
latest wrinkle in history: "Religion, Gospell, here lies at the stake."  
Yet she is most disturbed that the reformation must be purchased at so
great a risk ("Who knows, the worst, the best may overthrow") and at so high a price:

My plundered Townes, my houses devastation,
My ravished virgins, and my young men slain,
My wealthy trading fain, my dearth of grain,
The seed time's come, but Ploughman hath no hope,
Because he knows not, who shall inn his crop;
The poore they want their pay, their children bread,
Their woeful mother's tears unpitied. 26

"Old England" suffers from war itself, notwithstanding the righteousness of the Parliamentarian cause. The present war, now threatening the lives of citizens and corroding the nation's political foundation, is the most painful punishment yet from God for England's dalliance with Babylon's whore. "New England" replies in the final statement of the poem. Having realized and admitted her sins, "Old England" cannot but recover her health—indeed, she will enjoy a wholesomeness she has never before had. Besides confession and contrition. "Old England" must endure the present strife as a necessary part of her purification. At the end of the war, when God's true religion (just now championed by Parliament, according to "New England") triumphs, England will regain her institutions and her place as the world's foremost political power:

Out of all mists, such glorious days will bring,
That dazzled eyes beholding much shall wonder
At thy settled Peace, thy wealth and splendour,
Thy Church and Weal, establish't in such manner,
That all shall joy that thou display'dst thy banner,
And discipline erected, so I trust,
That nursing Kings, shall come and lick thy dust:
Then Justice shall in all thy Courts take place,
Without respect of persons, or or case,
Then bribes shall cease, and suits shall not stick long,
Patience, and purse of Clients for to wrong:
Then high Commissions shall for to decay,
And Pursevants and Catchpoles want their pay,
So shall thy happy Nation ever flourish,
When truth and righteousness they thus shall nourish. 27
In "A Dialogue Between Old England and New," "New England"'s role has been twofold. First, she has helped "Old England" into an understanding of her present predicament by forcing her to look at past historical patterns. Second, she has interpreted the present prophetically. "New England" has thus performed the role of the Puritan historian whose purpose is to "declare the Truth, [and] to set forth . . . the Glory of God." Secular history (the sequence of human interactions) is more than just a repetitious cycle of wars; it is God's chastisement for human intransigence that can, with God's grace and man's repentance, be transformed into obedience and peace. These notions are fundamental aspects of the errand, understood as New England's vocation to set an example of obedience to God's laws as enshrined in a reformed Christian church. Secular history, therefore, can be transformed into salvation history as mankind, led by old and new England, enters into a millennial age. Bradstreet's language appropriately paraphrases that in the Book of Revelation, since the millennium marks the omega point of history:

These are the days, the Churches foes to crush,  
To root our Prelates, head tail, branch, and rush.  
Let's bring Baals vestments out, to make a fire,  
Their Myters, Surplices, and all their tire . . .  
We hate Romes Whore, with all her trumperie . . .  
Bring forth the beast that rul'd the world with's beck,  
And tear his flesh, and set your feet on's neck,  
And make his filthy den so desolate,  
To th' 'stonishment of all that knew his state . . .  
Oh Abrahams seed lift up your heads on high,  
For sure the day of your redemption 's nigh . . .  
Farewell dear mother, Parliament, prevail,  
And in a while you'll tell another tale.  28

One cannot fail to inquire how the scripturally literal-minded Puritans got around the issue of the last days as set forth in the Book of Revelation. The fact is that no one seriously cultivated the notion
of a literal thousand year period of religious and civil calm. Not even Johnson in his most ebullient moment proposes that Christ is to actually descend from heaven; indeed, he rejects that interpretation. Bradstreet uses the apocalyptic mode much as the scriptural writer of Revelation did: to mark the end of a previous period of secular history and to comfort the persecuted by offering them a vision of a transcendent purpose to the tragic violence and carnage.

The dialectic in "A Dialogue Between Old England and New" cannot be said to express Bradstreet's personal coming to terms with the bare notion of errand. To the Puritan historian, the English nation's victory over Antichrist was a foregone conclusion, and as we have seen, "Old England" is as much a Puritan partisan as her daughter. Yet the apocalyptic mind-set implies the historical necessity of war as a secular analog to the chastisement portion of the process of conversion. Bradstreet, throughout the decade, is increasingly uncomfortable with this implication--especially as the notion of a holy warfare appears to take hold as a metaphor for the errand. Bradstreet's difference from Johnson (and for that matter, Wigglesworth) on this score is marked. Bradstreet, clearly moved by the singular suffering of the poor, sees the English civil war as a disease to be healed, and the relationship between the two Englands in terms of the tender love between a mother and daughter. Johnson's vision of the identical situation is stridently militaristic--rooted certainly in the fact of the civil war itself.

In Wonder-Working Providence, Johnson is a Puritan historian, teaching and exhorting; his narration transforms the events of the New England settlement into a war waged in two theatres: the wilderness
and the homeland. And Johnson sees Satan's minions everywhere, as Presbyterians and hostile Indians. For Johnson, founding a church in each settlement is equivalent to building a fortress. In recounting the events immediately preceding the Puritans' departure from England, Johnson describes the errand as a literal call to arms:

See then you store your selves with all sorts of weapons for war, furbish up your Swords, Rapiers, and all other piercing weapons. As for great Artillery, seeing present means fall short, waite on the Lord Christ, and hee will stir up friends to provide for you and in the meane time spare not your coyne for Powder, Bullets, Match, Armes of all sorts, and all kindes of Instruments for War . . . . As the worthy encouragement of a Soldiers Labour, let Military discipline be had in high esteeme among you . . . . seeing yee are called to fight the Battailes of your Lord Christ. 30

And in describing the physical effort of settling the land and building a reformed church, the idea of a military operation is wholly transformed into metaphor:

And behold the worthies of Christ, as they are boldly leading forth his Troopes into these Westerne Fields, marke them well Man by Man as they march, terrible as an Army with Banners, croud in all yee that long to see this glorious sight; see, ther's their glorious King Christ /on/ that white Horse, whose hoofes like flint cast not only sparkes, but flames of fire in his pathes. 31

In "A Dialogue Between Old England and New," Bradstreet asserts "That Right may have its right, though't be with blood," and although she cannot approve of those who refuse to help England with arms, her contribution will be prayer. Still, like Johnson, Bradstreet is in 1642, a propagandist for the Puritan errand of which warfare is an inevitable aspect. Johnson continues to write Wonder-Working Providence until 1653, preaching the same message: the Puritans of New England are God's special people, ordained to give an example to the whole world of true
Christianity; the settlement of the wilderness is a kind of warfare against the antichrist which takes on literal dimensions in New England's treatment of sectaries and Indians; finally, the people must be faithful to God if they are to continue in his blessings. (Johnson wrote most of his narration at the time when New England felt threatened by Presbyterians, Familists, Anabaptists, among others.) Bradstreet goes on to write "The Four Monarchies" and "David's Lamentation for Saul and Jonathan" between 1643 and 1649, but these poems show Bradstreet's attitude to have changed considerably. Neither of the poems refers directly to the errand, but both of them clearly show that Bradstreet has become quite concerned with the causes and effects of war.

In "The Four Monarchies," Bradstreet takes a closer look at secular history, adopting the assumptions and methodology of Ralegh in The History of the World (1614). Ralegh's history enjoyed considerable esteem among New England Puritans, principally because it asserted God's causal role in the universe, denied astral determinism and other such natural forces as primary causes in history, and used scripture as a chief source of facts. On the other hand, Ralegh implied some notions that might have been troublesome to such a fervent partisan as Johnson; Bradstreet, in "The Four Monarchies," appears more willing to speculate. In the preface to The History of the World, Ralegh suggests Augustine's distinction between sacred and secular history. The history of redemption—containing acts and events of a wholly transcendent nature—and the history of mankind's interactions are totally separate, even though God controls secular history by means of secondary instruments (e.g., the physical laws that sustain nature are of God's creation). Secondary agency interested Ralegh much
more than did salvation history. Like Augustine, Ralegh conceived of the past as a pageant to be watched by people in the present. The living could learn from the actions of their predecessors, but Ralegh considered human nature to be essentially immutable. The decline of the world was an illusion created by the spectacle of rising and falling fortunes, but even this sort of mutability was predictable. History's stage was replenished age after age by new sets of actors, playing out similar dramas with different costumes and props. If the world was not declining, however, neither was it progressing toward an apotheosis, and certainly not the kind envisioned in the Puritan errand.

Many of Ralegh's assertions and implications emerge as Bradstreet's in "The Four Monarchies." For Bradstreet, secular history records the efforts of mankind to restrain its worst inclinations. Secular history is also the record of a postlapsarian period that Bradstreet does not define in Christian terms:

When Time was young, and World in infancy,
Man did not strive for Soveraignty,
But each one thought his petty rule was high,
If of his house he held the Monarchy: 33
This was the Golden Age . . . .

Civil government is the mark of secular history, arising when human populations swell beyond the possibility of control in smaller structures like families or clans. Self-interest and pride replace reason and fair play; and if people expect their leaders to show them examples of virtue, they are mistaken. The men who are given power or who seize it rush headlong into empire building by any means possible, and they justify their avarice by appealing to religion and the misty notion of national
destiny. Deifying themselves, monarchs throughout secular history have led their subjects into idolatry. Bradstreet is perhaps only slightly less harsh toward women who have achieved positions of power, and she is sympathetic to those caught in the crossfire of the power struggles among men. Semiramis is a sybaritic shrew who murders her own husband and impersonates her son in her scheming efforts to become ruler of Babylonia; Bradstreet, however, questions the reliability of the sources of this information, suggesting that Greek slanderers have cast aspersion on the queen's worth. Semiramis merely took advantage of the opportunities before her, Bradstreet asserts, and in the exercise of power Semiramis was neither extremely good nor bad. Ancient history does have its viragoes, nonetheless, and Bradstreet shows no reluctance to expose them. They include Amestris, King Xerxes' wife (who in a jealous rage, cut off the breasts of her innocent sister-in-law) and Alexander the Great's murderous mother, Queen Olympias. Bradstreet's opinion of these ladies is unequivocal: Amestris is a harpy, a "hag of hell," and Olympias is a "most cruel Queen" who "who oft forgot the bounds of Humanity." 

Secular history, according to Bradstreet, is nothing more than the record of mankind's unmitigated brutishness. Civil governments are subverted to aggrandize a few and enslave the rest. Men and women in the pursuit of power forget ties of family and friends; self-interest and lucre seduce them into committing inhuman acts. Conscience dims and the innocent are cut down in their prime. Bradstreet's unrelieved pessimism is underscored by her selection and organization of details. Following Ralegh, Bradstreet employs a traditional pattern of universal
historiography, the division of the world into four kingdoms: the Assyrian (Babylonia), Persian, Greek, and Roman. As Ralegh used the pattern, these monarchies have spatial as well as chronological dimensions; Ralegh was describing as much the contiguity of nations, as their chronological development; and he marshalled these details under another traditional pattern, the res gestae--or, the deeds of noble personages. Ralegh's history for the most part consists of quasi-biographies showing the monarchies to be interlocking and at times simultaneous. Ralegh also follows the convention of beginning with the creation of the world and the foundation of ancient Israel. Bradstreet diverges from Ralegh in omitting the story of mankind's fall and God's calling of the Jews--unusual for a Puritan historian--and in proceeding directly to the four monarchies, which she portrays as strictly sequential. Further, Bradstreet alludes to an analogous conventional pattern of universal historiography, the four ages of the world; this would seem to imply that Bradstreet thought the world to be steadily decaying.

The notion of declension, however, is not one that Bradstreet pushes very far. What she does present is history as pageant; each monarchy follows upon the other, and each has its starring villains. Bradstreet's fullest portrait is of Alexander the Great, whom she follows from "the very day of his nativity" until his death. Alexander's career is a textbook example of Machiavellian statecraft. After the death of his father, Alexander quickly consolidates power by executing suspected rivals, including members of his own family:

His kinsmen puts to death without least cause
That no combustion in his absence be,
In seeking after Soveraignty:
And many more, whom he suspects will climbe,
NOW taste death . . . . 35
From there, Alexander embarks upon his famous blitzkrieg of annexation; leaving newly conquered lands to the administration of trusted viceroys, Alexander—"Restless both day and night"—moves from capital to capital in order to bring about "his high resolves."

There is a sense in which Bradstreet is genuinely amazed at the heroic proportions of Alexander ("The universe, scarce bounds his large vast minde"), but amazement is not admiration. Alexander's gallant treatment of Darius' wife and children, who are his prisoners of war, carries little weight against his increasing egomania, cruelty, and debauchery. Alexander has himself declared a god, indulges his perverse libido, murders his best friends and advisers upon the merest whim, and devastates an entire town because the people do not speak Greek. "By Art, and Nature both, he was made fit," says Bradstreet, but he was "Cruell by nature, and by custom too, / As oft his Acts throughout his reign did shew: / More boundless in ambition then the skie, / Vain thirsting after immortality ...." What Bradstreet reveals in her treatment of Alexander is a horror of the senseless violence that comes with empire-building and statecraft. She strongly suggests that egomania is concomitant with the acquisition of power, and so is war. This pattern is unrelieved in Bradstreet's "The Four Monarchies."

Bradstreet's point of view between 1643-47 is certainly different from that of 1642. She has moved away from endorsing the pervasively accepted idea of a "just war," and idea integral to the Puritan errand, and she has elected instead to take a more critical position on the issue of political motivation. To the extent that "The Four Monarchies" renders a harsh verdict upon secular history without the conventional recourse to the exegesis of escape through salvation history, Bradstreet
has declared the truth without setting forth the glory of God. Bradstreet's omission of the paradise-regained motif does not make her "un-Puritan," however; and similarly, to conclude that she lurches ominously toward anarchism, nihilism, historical futility, or a Machiavellian mode of historiography, is to overstate the case. Unlike Machiavelli, Bradstreet does not suggest that secular history is autonomous and that historical events are devoid of a transcendent moral dimension. Her frequent expressions of moral outrage in "The Four Monarchies" are evidence that she saw secular history through the lens of Christian ethics: she says, for example, that Alexander would do better to worship the true God instead of himself; and in the only allusion to Christian eschatology, Bradstreet says that the lion, bear, leopard, and ram—emblems of the four monarchies—"All trembling stand, before that powerful Lambe." Further, she suggests the conventional idea of history as a mirror when she laments that Alexander has not learned from the examples of past rulers.

What sort of truth was Bradstreet declaring, then? An answer to this question must include speculation about her overall plan for "The Four Monarchies," which can be pieced together from her comments in the apology and from what is known about her activities between 1643-47. Her earliest intention was clearly to write a secular history in the mode of the universal historians whose methodology was to divide history into epochs such as the four monarchies, the four ages, or the covenants (testaments) between God and man. The universal historian aimed to show that the whole world was under God's providence, so that the most brutal tyrant could not escape judgment, even though in the long view of universal history, such a man was playing a divinely ordained role.
Ralegh, who in the first decades of the seventeenth century was the last important practitioner of this essentially medieavl convention, discovered God's hand in the blood and gore of English history, as he declares in the preface to *The History of the World*:

> Oh by what plots, by what forswearings, betrayings, oppressions, imprisonments, tortures, poysonings, and under what reasons of state, and politique subtletie; have . . . kings, both strangers and of our own nation, pulled the vengeance of God upon themselves, upon theirs, and upon their prudent ministers. 38

This is a working notion in Ralegh's history, whereas it is an assumption that Bradsteet takes for granted in "A Dialogue Between Old England and New." It becomes a working notion again in "The Four Monarchies," as Bradstreet makes a closer inspection of political motives. "The Four Monarchies" may therefore have been intended as a mirror for England's contemporary magistrates. In the apology immediately following the "Greek Monarchy," Bradstreet states an idea in the tradition of the fall of princes:

> Thus Kings, and Kingdoms, have their times, and dates, Their standings, overturnings, bounds and fates; Now up, now down, now chief, and then brought under; The Heavens thus rule, to fill the earth with wonder. 39

And the enormity of Alexander's egomania and cruelty would not have been lost upon a Puritan audience who identified these vices in Charles I.

On the other hand, one can legitimately question why Bradstreet does not follow to the letter the pattern of universal historiography (Ralegh does not either, for that matter). By the 1640's, universal history was long out of vogue, except for Puritans who still favored the typology that equated the Roman monarchy with the Catholic church and both with the antichrist. Universal history, when it was heavily overlaid with the language and imagery from the prophetic books of
the Bible (both testaments), explained the errand, giving specific phases of its present fulfillment historical depth and cosmic significance. In this connection, Edward Johnson's iconology of the Puritan millennium makes perfect sense:

'[Christ's] glorious Victories over Antichrist are at hand, never yet did any Soldier rejoice in dividing the spoyle after Victory, as all the Souldiers of Christ shall, to see his judgement executed upon the great Whore, and withall the Lambs bride prepared for him, who comes Skipping over and trampling down the great Mountains of the Earth, whose universall Government will then appeare glorious, when not onely the Assyrian, Babilonian, Persian, Grecian and Roman monarchies shall subject themselves unto him, but also all other new upstart Kingdoms, Dukedoms, or what else can be named, shall fall before him; Not that he shall come personally to reign upon the Earth (as some vaingly imagine) but his powerfull Presence and Glorious brightnesse of his Gospel both to Jew and Gentile, shall not onely spiritually cause the Churches of Christ to grow beyond number, but also the whole civill Government of people upon Earth shall become his, so that there shall not be any to move the hand, nor dog his tongue against his chosen, And then shall the time be of breaking Speares into mattocks, and Swords into Sithes; and this to remaine to his last comming, which will be personally to overcome the last enemies of his Saints, even death, which hee will doe by the word of his Moutn, audibly Spoken the World throughout. 40

These are Bradsteet's sentiments exactly in "A Dialogue"; but if she still held them two to five years later, she fails to express them in the very genre that would have been most appropriate. Possibly she intended a sequel to "The Four Monarchies," although no evidence exists to support such an inference. Most certainly she was becoming weary of history writing; she completed the section on the Roman monarchy only because she felt that she must "finish what's begun." The period between 1643-47 was also hectic for her personally. The family had not been at Ipswich five years when her father and her husband uprooted the the clan and removed them to the remote settlement at North Andover.
Bradstreet gave birth to several children during this period, and in 1643, her mother died, followed a year later by her father's remarriage. The Puritans of Massachusetts also received word of Anne Hutchinson's grisly murder, which was reported (by Johnson, for example) with great satisfaction as the judgment of God; this event unquestionably must have shaken the poet, especially since her father had been one of the magistrates to condemn Hutchinson to exile. The distractions of this period no doubt contributed to the unfinished and piecemeal quality of "The Four Monarchies."

Very likely, Bradstreet began to have second thoughts about the direction that events in England were taking, and the first hints of future disillusionment are to be found in "A Dialogue Between Old England and New." As already noted, Old England worries that "the worst, the best may overthrow"; "New England" expressed the hope that the Parliamentary cause will be "Not false to King, nor Country . . . But those that hurt his people and his Crown, / By force expel, destroy, and tread them down." These statements betray the kind of ambivalence found among moderate Puritans who hoped that a Parliamentarian victory would not also bring down English institutions. The Grand Remonstrance of 1640 broached such a threat, according to moderates, when it questioned the king's prerogatives. Yet, Puritans were convinced that Charles, like his father James, had led the nation into idolatry and debauchery—not to mention economic ruin—and that at the very least a thorough reformation was in order. It is fair to say that most New England Puritans, unlike the truly revolutionary Levellers and Fifth Monarchists, believed that a reformation could occur without Charles but not without the monarchy. At the same time, these same
Puritans recoiled at the notion of regicide; this act, they felt, flew in the face of the divinely mandated order of the secular world.

Perhaps Bradstreet sensed the impending ruin of the Puritan dream in England as early as the mid-forties, although this conjecture can never be absolutely proven. After "A Dialogue," however, Bradstreet never returned to a categorical, public endorsement of the Puritan errand, and her final history poem of this period, "David's Lamentation for Saul and Jonathan" is an elegy commemorating the event Bradstreet hoped would not occur. "David's Lamentation" is a close paraphrase of the elegy found in Samuel 2: 19-28, although the account of David's troubles with Saul and his friendship with Saul's son, Jonathan, is developed in I and II Samuel. The biblical account of how the ancient Israelites acquired a king perhaps sheds some light on the Puritan conception of the legitimacy of the monarchy within a theocracy. God approved of Saul because the people needed someone to lead them in battle and to defend the national honor. In short, the king of ancient Israel symbolized the theocracy before the heathens. If the king fell into a life of vice, God could replace him with a worthier man, which is precisely what happened to Saul and David. David laments Saul's murder, however, because Saul bore the indelible character of divine anointing—a sacramental character whose efficacy derived from God's will for mankind, not from an individual man's behavior. Recognizing this, David refused to slay Saul when the opportunities to do so presented themselves, and even when preserving Saul's life endangered his own. Jonathan's role in the drama is that of mediator trying to reconcile the vice-ridden king, jealous of his enormous power, to his rival David. Jonathan, like the more wary Puritans,
recognizes the fact that Saul is no longer suited to the throne, but he works for some peaceful settlement. He, too, is cut down.

Bradstreet's "plagiarism" of David's elegy assumes the reader's knowledge of the story. David's grief at the carnage before him is genuine and is expressed on behalf of the whole nation; so is Bradstreet's. Throughout the decade, her nagging preoccupation is with the necessity and effects of violence. David had hoped that his appointment to the throne would come to pass without bloodshed; he came to discover that power follows its own law. Bradstreet certainly had in mind the question that Parliament itself faced in 1649: what does one do with a king who continues to be a formidable threat, even after being forcibly removed from power? Bradstreet's answer is that Parliament's decision to execute Charles has all of the inevitability of providence or fate—the catchwords of secular history—but none of David's courage and hope, the marks of a redeemed and chosen race.

Parliament may have had no other choice, given the momentum and sequence of the preceding events, but Bradstreet rejects the outcome nonetheless. "David's Lamentation for Saul and Jonathan" marks the decline of the Puritan errand for Bradstreet. "The Four Monarchies" perhaps should be read as containing the intellectual considerations leading up to the demystification of the errand: Bradstreet pondered secular history and found that the bad were supplanted by the not-much-better; Parliament's latest act seemed to renew that law of history.

Edward Johnson's faith in the errand continued unabated. His Wonder-Working Providence carried New England's conquest of the wilderness into 1653. By this time, Bradstreet, for whom the specific
American wilderness had not become an element of her poetic vision, had exchanged the poetry of public voice for the poetry of meditation in which she decries worldly vanity and the inclinations of the flesh. In this she anticipated the themes that were to express the disillusionment of future Puritan preachers and poets when it became clear that England would not adopt the New England example of civil and religious polity and when New England itself seemed increasingly to stray from its original vision.
NOTES

1. Piercy, p. 115. Piercy, White, and Stanford include in their books about Bradstreet several pages each dealing with the history verse. Not a single article focusing exclusively or in major part on the history verse appeared in the two decades between 1960 and 1980, however, a surprising fact in view of the large amount of Bradstreet scholarship during this period.

2. White, p. 228


4. White, p. 228.


6. Both Wonder-Working Providence by Edward Johnson and Bradstreet's "A Dialogue Between Old England and New" show the influence of the jeremiad, particularly "New England's Tears," preached by William Hook in Taunton, Massachusetts on July 23, 1640, and "Meroz Cursed," by Stephen Marshall, who preached before the House of Commons on February 23, 1641. The best description of the jeremiad form, especially as it relates to the Puritan errand, is to be found in Perry Miller, Errand into the Wilderness (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956) and Sacvan Bercovitch, The American Jeremiad (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1978). The jeremiad, or political sermon, promulgated the idea of the Puritan mission; it focused on a specific current event and interpreted its significance in light of biblical (redemptive) and secular history, blending these two strains to produce a unique rationale for colonization. Preachers interpreted current events prophetically and exhorted the audience to adhere to the covenant they had with God. The jeremiad closed with a recommendation to specific action, usually prayer, but occasionally—as in "Meroz Cursed"—the people were encouraged to support drastic, even violent, political action. The jeremiads named above can be found in the anthology In God's Name: Examples of Preaching in England from the Act of Supremacy to the Act of Uniformity, 1534-1662, ed. John Chandos (New York, 1971). Other jeremiads and related tracts include Thomas Hooker, "The Danger of Desertion (1630); John Winthrop "A Modell of Christian Charity" (1630); John Cotton, "God's Promise to His Plantation" (1630); Stephen Marshall, "Reformation and Desolation" (1641).

7. Bradstreet is the only woman on record, either in England or Massachusetts, as writing verse history between 1640 and 1650. She was certainly not without precedent in electing the genre; as Arthur
Ferguson suggests in Clio Unbound, Perception of the Social and Cultural Past in Renaissance England (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1979), pp. 28-38, Michael Drayton and Samuel Daniel "turned from the conventional chronicle form to poetical history" in part because of Sidney's opinion (The Defense of Poesy) that "poets were better equipped to elucidate the past" (p. 35). George Puttenham (Arte of English Poesie) believed that "Poesie historical is of all other next the divine most honorable and worthy" (quoted in Ferguson, p. 33). According to Sidney and Puttenham, the writers of verse history articulated particular truths (narration of particular contingent events) and general truths (philosophical significance of those events).

For Puritan readers in seventeenth-century New England, histories provided the most engaging source of analysis and edification, second only to sermons. Puritans agreed with Cicero's description of history as the "witness of times, mistress of life, the life of remembrance, of truth the lights, and messenger of antiquity" (quoted in Ferguson, p. 3). The term "history," is fluid and vulnerable to equivocal use. In the seventeenth century, history meant the Augustinian notion of time as beginning with original sin. Or, in a more specific sense, it meant a narrative of events in time, accompanied or not by an emphasis on second causes. In this sense, history was considered a branch of rhetoric. Finally, the term history referred to the subjective experience of time in which a society claimed an eternal, or at least metaphistorical, significance for ordinary events: salvation, reformation, destiny, fortune were some of the terms that expressed such insight. The New England Puritans gave history all three meanings more or less simultaneously. Hence, they preferred universal histories. Like Raleigh's The History of the World, since this genre portrayed God as an active agent in human affairs.

F. J. Levy, Tudor Historical Thought (San Marino, California: The Huntington Library, 1967), pp. 33-123.


To the first generation of Puritans at Massachusetts Bay, the decade of the 1640's was a turning point. The steady stream of English migrants that in the preceding ten years inflated the commonwealth's population from less than a thousand to over twelve thousand inhabitants, came to a
halt between 1640 and 1641. An increasingly prosperous and independent-minded community suddenly faced the prospect of fulfillment of its public mission conceived in part as providing England and the rest of Europe with an example of a proper Bible commonwealth (according to Winthrop, "a due form of government supporting a congregational church polity" A Model of Christian Charity, p. 197). The concept of mission was bolstered by the migration itself, made up of people who claimed to be responding to God's mandate of "filling the Land wither [they were] sent" so that they might "enjoy Christ and his Ordinances in their primitive purity" (Wonder-Working Providence, pp. 25; 22). The volume of people who "forsook a fruitfull Land, stately Buildings, goodly Gardens, Orchards, yea, deare Friends, and neere Relations, to goe to a desert Wilderness, thousands of leagues by Sea, both turbulent and dangerous" (WWP, p. 21-2), was a clear indication of the historical significance of the Massachusetts Bay project: it was God's instrument in bringing about the salvation of the world, a process typified in the Old Testament and continuing in present time.

The cessation of the so-called Great Migration resulted from events in England in the 1640's, and they warrant a brief review since they were topical in the sermons and literary works in New England, especially in Bradstreet's "A Dialogue Between Old England and New." In the early years of the decade, a determined Parliament, tired of Charles I's erratic demands, systematically dismantled the government by legislation that drastically reduced the prerogatives of the king and the bishops. The Grand Remonstrance of 1640 pilloried Charles for his abrogation of English common law with respect to Parliament itself; Parliament demanded oversight of the king's choice of advisers, as well as leadership in a thorough reform of the English church. In 1641, Parliament abolished the infamous Star Chamber, the crown's own secret inquisitorial court of Tudor creation. The Root and Branch Petition, passed narrowly in 1640, was aimed at abolishing the episcopacy, and it was followed in 1642 by the Bishop's Exclusion Act--in effect, ejecting the bishops from Parliament. Meanwhile the detested Archbishop Laud landed in prison in 1641, to be executed four years later. A similar, but quicker fate fell to Thomas Wentworth, the Earl of Strafford. In 1641, Parliament passed an act of attainder condemning him to death, and the sentence was carried out on May 12. Blood began to flow as early as 1638, when Scots irate over the royal enforcement of Laud's prayer book erupted in border fighting that lasted until 1640. The following year witnessed the rampage of Irish Catholics incited by the cruelty and incompetence of English rule under Strafford; their uprising was then brutally suppressed. The civil war was officially on when a beleaguered Charles met the forces of an increasingly angry and radicalized Parliament on August 22, 1642.

The war between Parliament and the crown claimed the attention and enlisted the support of those people who would have migrated to New England; in fact, a thin trickle of repatriation from New England (which included Nathaniel Ward) began and ended in the 1640's. Obviously, the overwhelming majority of New England Puritans sided with Parliament against the king; the confrontation was regarded as the trumpet blasts heralding the victory of the just over the antichrist. In the meantime, the government and institutions of New England were solidifying. In 1641, the Massachusetts General Court passed a code of laws known as the
Body of Liberties which defined, among other things, capital crimes (e.g., idolatry, blasphemy, witchcraft, etc.). Towns grew in size and
number as people took possession of increasingly more land; in 1643, and
largely out of fear of angry Indians, the colonies of Massachusetts,
Connecticut, and New Haven signed articles of confederation—in effect,
a mutual defense pact.


Johnson might have pointed to all sorts of
portents of Christ's coming victory: the erection of the New Model
Armey in 1645, under Fairfax and Cromwell—the future Lord Protector and
vociferous Puritan parliamentarian whose fortunes were on the ascendant;
Parliament's victories on the field resulting in Charles' flight in
1646, as well as New England's growing prosperity—all of these were
reasons for New Englanders to rejoice. But Johnson appears most impressed
with the Scottish resistance of Laud and with Parliament's efforts to
nullify the bishops' political power:

Now gather you King-like Bishops, and make use of all the
Kingly power you can, for the cloud is suddenly come up,
\textit{Christ}/ rose upon the Cerub and did flie. And now let the
Children of Sion rejoice in their King, for the Lord hath
pleasure in his people, hee will make the meeke glorious
by deliverance; And that the whole Earth may know it is the
Lords owne worke, the Arch-prelate and his complices must begin
to war with the Scots, and that implacably; the Prelates
desire a Parliament thinking to establish iniquity by a Law,
but the iniquity of the Amorites is already full, and all your
cunning counsellors shall but contrive your owne destruction;
They remonstrant \textit{Sic}/ against all Acts of Parliament that
pass without their Vote, and by this means wind out themselves
for ever voting more, they devise how they may have such
persons committed to prison as favour not their proceding,
but the Lord turned their mischiefe they conceived upon their
owne pates, and they themselves were sent to prison by halfe a
a score at a time . . .

Indeed, signs abounded in the early years of the conflict to allow Johnson
to proclaim the moral victory of the New England Way and its divinely
assured implantation in England:

\begin{quote}
There appears a little cloud . . . out of the Western
Ocean, Ay but the Lord Christ is in it, out of Sion the
perfection of beauty hath God shined. Our God shall come,
and shall not keep silence, a Fire shall devour afore him,
and mighty tempests shall be moved round him (157).
\end{quote}

Johnson's prophecy was not fulfilled, since from the very beginning
internecine fighting complicated the business of Parliament to steer
a secure path for the nation. Throughout the decade, the moderate
Presbyterians and the radical Independents were thoroughly divided on the
formula for religious settlement; and to the dismay of the New England
Puritans, the Presbyterian faction dominated until the middle of the
decade. At the same time, the army, whose rank and file consisted of
Independents with connections to the revolutionary Levellers, revolted in
1647. Charles took advantage of the situation in 1648, by attempting a
comeback. He failed, and the events of the next months sealed the fate of the Parliamentarian cause. In December, Parliament was purged of the Presbyterians, and a "rump" Parliament of Independents remained which drew up articles of execution against Charles. These were carried out on January 30, 1649. English men and women on both sides of the Atlantic were revolted at the enormity of regicide, and this sentiment played a role in the eventual disarray and collapse of the Puritan commonwealth in England.

New England Puritans worried all along in the 1640's that their co-religionists at home exerted too little control over the many factions. Nathaniel Ward, in "The Simple Cobbler of Aggawam (1647), took a satiric swipe at precisely that issue. After all, the little band of "saints" had only recently won its own struggle against antinomians and other sectaries (1636-38), and they were convinced that nothing short of a hard line on orthodoxy would guarantee the success of the errand. Nevertheless, encouraged by the early Presbyterian majorities in Parliament, Ranters, Anabaptists, Fifth Monarchists, Familists, and other assorted "free-thinkers" surfaced in Massachusetts, making a synod necessary in 1646. The outcome was a virtual victory for the hardliners in a document known as the Cambridge Platform. This document contained the official description of the nature and purpose of the Bible commonwealth, explained the relationship between civil magistrates and the church, and upheld the congregational polity; and its promulgation coincided with the turn in Parliaments toward the Independents.

See Edward J. Gallagher, "An Overview of Edward Johnson's Wonder-Working Providence," Early American Literature, 3 (1971), pp. 30-49. Gallagher says (pp. 40ff) that the proclamation scene at the beginning of WWP functions as myth to enable the readers to feel their election. The WWP is a "spiritual biography" of the colony.


As a Puritan, Bradstreet accepted Augustine's idea that history came into being with mankind's fall from grace. History was also the story of mankind's troubled existence and of God's efforts to heal the breach created by the original act of disobedience and pride. History, according to Augustine, narrated not only human acts, but divine ones, as well; God's activity in man's world was both providential (in creating the universe and sustaining its natural processes and relationships) and salvific. History in general demonstrated divine agency of which Augustine recognized a special element: God's specific work of redemption.

Augustine's distinction between sacred and secular, or providential, elements in history grew out of a perception of disparity between Christian teaching and pagan philosophy. Pagan philosophy rested upon abstract argumentation, while Christianity depended from a radical act of faith in the truth of historically contingent events: the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ. From this recognition sprang Augustine's famous metaphor of the two cities by which he contrasted two opposing but overlapping perspectives: one posited God's extraordinary actions on behalf of mankind (the perspective of the historian and the prophet). The second focused on non-revealed knowledge and logical discourse (the realm of the...
philosopher and the politician). Augustine's civitas dei and civitas terrena described contrasting habits of mind, opposing world views that confronted the Christian of his day. Augustine's argument was aimed at undercutting the popular conception (forwarded earlier by Eusebius' near apotheosis of Constantine, and continued in the writings of the universal historian Orosius, Augustine's contemporary) that the Roman empire under Constantine and Theodosius I was a messianic political state. An equally unsatisfactory notion was the Hyppolytan insistence that the Roman emperor was the antichrist. Augustine determined to the contrary of both theories that the state is theologically neutral: Rome's collapse proved its finitude; on the other hand, a Christian could live and function in the state without necessarily jeopardizing his soul. Augustine simply argued that the millennium, the New Jerusalem, was already a fact; it was spiritually present in Christ, his church, and in the heart of each baptized person. The man or woman who believed this and lived his or her life as a pilgrim in secular time was a citizen of the city of God. For a detailed exposition of these ideas, see R. A. Markus, Saeculum: History and Society in the Theology of St. Augustine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), passim.

19 Johnson, p. 23.
25 "A Dialogue," p. 146. This line is admittedly ambiguous; the context, however, could support such a reading, and the revised version of this poem reads, "Who knows, but this may be my overthrow" (p. 487).
29 J. William T. Youngs, Jr., "The Indian Saints of Early New England," Early American Literature, 16 (1981-82), pp. 241-256. Youngs reports that some Indians converted to Christianity which proved to the Puritans that Christ was at work to transform the wilderness. Between 1647 and 1651,
a number of tracts emerged celebrating these "victories." They included *The Day-Breaking, if not the Sun Rising of the Gospel* (1647), *The Clear Sun-shine of the Gospel* (1648), *The Glorious Progress of the Gospel* (1649), and *The Light Appearing more and more toward the Perfect Day* (1651). Thomas Shepard was presumably the author of the first two works.

30 Johnson, p. 33.
31 Johnson, p. 49.
32 "A Dialogue," p. 146. (Emphasis mine.)
33 "The Four Monarchies," p. 53.
34 "The Four Monarchies," p. 94.
35 "The Four Monarchies," p. 94.
40 Johnson, pp. 34-5.
CHAPTER FOUR

The "Puritanization" of Anne Bradstreet: The Shift to the Private Voice

Whatever misgivings Bradstreet had about the direction of history, she always professed an orthodox faith. She believed in the doctrine of election and reprobation, in the need of saving grace, and (as "A Dialogue Between Old England and New" illustrates) in the laborious and painful process of conversion in which an individual arrived at a tentative assurance of election (and only then if s/he were in fact one of the elect—a bedeviling conundrum within Puritan soteriology).

For Bradstreet the Christian pilgrim, certain realities lay at the center of belief: the sovereignty of God; mankind's and her own abject dependence upon him; the certainty of death and the consequent separation of loved ones. Central, too, were marriage and motherhood as giving her life identity and purpose. Even in the midst of her early infatuation with the great and the famous, she never lost sight of these Puritan "facts." In the course of nearly forty years of versifying, however, the a priori "facts" became existentially true. Once experienced, such events as death, the treachery of the unregenerate world, separation, and even the second-class status of women no longer presented themselves as stumbling blocks to the poet who also yearned for salvation. Only a recalcitrant will remained to the broken so as to be made a "vessell fit for God's7 use."

It is as though Bradstreet saw her entire life to be a process of
conversion, an observation with which she would not disagree:

I have been with God like an untoward child, that no longer then the rod has been on my back (or at least in sight) but I have been apt to forget him and my Self too. Before I was afflicted and went astray, but now I keep thy statues. 4

The long view of Bradstreet's career shows her to have changed her mind about writing, as well. The omnipresent self-consciousness, so obtrusive in the public verse, assumes a new direction around 1650, taking leave of a studied experimentation in learned forms (what she desired to master, but always feared was beyond her reach) and embracing more willingly the task of recording in verse the variable state of her soul. Her decision to abandon the poetry of public voice may have been a partial consequence of her awareness of deficiency in education, worldly experience, and technical training:

To sing of Wars, of Captains, and of Kings
Of Cities founded, Common-wealths begun,
For my mean Pen, are too superiour things,
And how they all, or each, their dates have run:
Let Poets, and Historians set these forth,
My obscure Verse, shal not so dim their worth.

but is was also the consequence of an imposed feminine incompatibility with the public voice. When Johnson and Wigglesworth wrote about the errand, they frequently assumed the persona of Christ himself, exhorting the flock to carry out the terms of the mission, whereas Bradstreet opts for the "quieter" discourse between a mother and daughter (an image which no doubt came from her own experience). Nor could Bradstreet be the worldly-wise and polished intellectual (virtues she admired in Sidney and du Bartas) precisely because she was a woman, a fact that she resisted in the early years, even as she paid homage to the preeminence of men.

In the meantime, the "morphology of conversion" beginning with
self-abasement before God and culminating in a sweet influx of saving grace subsequently to be made brackish by fears of self-delusion, was in the 1630's and 40's increasingly becoming a part of the "New England Way," and it extended into a rhetorical and esthetic mode for Puritan poets, the direct result of the practice of recording in journals the vicissitudes of individual spiritual lives. Watching oneself advance and regress in one's pilgrimage not only provided a topic, but a point of view, a stance or relationship to a topic which the poet as dramatis persona could assume, as well as a line of movement within a poem. For the mature Bradstreet, the experience of illness or separation frequently becomes the setting for a rendezvous with God wherein she may negotiate her salvation. The emphasis is on the soul's transformation, expressed as a thorough humiliation under God's chastizing rod, accompanied by an admission of inherent unworthiness. From there, the poet may move to plead for a renewal of health or for the restoration of a family member. The bargaining chip is precisely her suffering; although it is deserved, she can use it to persuade God toward mercy. In return, she will publicize God's goodness by a more exemplary life. Filtered through Puritan dogmatics, the experience of humiliation and an exemplary life were signs (albeit occasionally fallible) of election when coupled with skepticism of their genuineness. For Bradstreet, the validity of her election is to be found in unceasing trials and vigilance over her attitudes and conduct; she can never do enough to repay God, nor can she really know—but must be continually shown—how completely dependent upon God she is. Under these psychological conditions in which virtually every experience is tied to salvation, poetry is more than a record of those experiences: it is a way in which the poet may assess her relationship to God, and
insofar as she praises God, a way of fulfilling her debt.

Just as the notion of a divine errand gave rise to the poetry of public voice in New England, so Puritan spirituality (with its assertion of individual depravity and the need for justification in faith) gave rise to the verse of private voice in which the poet turns inward to consider his/her progress toward God. Both kinds of poetry aimed to display God's glory: the first to the community; the second in the disclosure of a personal experience of grace. Except for "A Dialogue Between Old England and New," Bradstreet's verse gives evidence of less lofty, but necessarily unorthodox purposes to show the glories of human knowledge and art, as well as to chronicle the depravities of unregenerate mankind. These ostensible purposes are not restricted to the public verse, however; they are crystallized in the private verse of the same period (the thirties and forties) in the form of allusions or as aspects of diction and style. After 1650, however, Bradstreet ceases to write public verse, and her private verse increasingly loses the stylistic benefits of her experimentation; instead, the private verse assumes a resemblance in subject matter, form, and movement to the spiritual exercises of conversion. This shift comes about as a result of her "puritanization": her full embrace of a private spirituality (the requirement of each of the elect) and a private role (a divine mandate to her gender). Bradstreet's imagination is sparked into poetic action whenever specific events test or confirm her beliefs; and in exchange for a tentative assurance of salvation, Bradstreet renounces the pursuit of knowledge and fame as vain and out of keeping with her womanly role.
Not surprisingly, Bradstreet yields to the "facts" of her faith after the public humiliation of Anne Hutchinson and of her own sister, Sarah Dudley Keane, both of whom were eventually silenced after a period of grudging toleration by authorities. Hutchinson and Keane attempted the task forbidden to woman of elucidating the scriptures; hence, they assumed a public teaching role. Less is known of Keane than of Hutchinson, but in 1646, Stephen Winthrop (son of John, and brother-in-law to Bradstreet's brother, Samuel Dudley) wrote, "My she Cosin Keane is growne a great preacher," a reference to her activities in London during the early years of the civil war. Upon her return to Boston in 1646 with her husband Benjamin, Sarah Keane apparently continued to preach, for she was "in open Assembly Admonished of hir Irregular Prophesying in mixt Assemblies and for Refusing ordinarily to heare in the Churches of Christ." Also leveled against the young woman were charges of adultery, brought about by her husband who listened to the whisperings of "Godly frends," and who was convinced that his wife had a venereal disease. These charges were enunciated in a series of letters to Thomas Dudley and John Cotton, and in addition to her open rebellion as a preacher, they led in 1647 to Benjamin's divorce from Sarah and her excommunication from the Boston church. She lived in poverty and obscurity until her death in 1659.

Sarah Keane's sad life exemplified the way in which a seemingly redeemed woman could "turn bad," how she could repudiate her nature and her role by refusing to submit her mind to God and his vicars the clergy, and her body to her husband. Such a woman was self-deluded. Of course, the most celebrated example of womanly rebellion and pride was Anne
Hutchinson. In his Autobiography, the eminent divine Thomas Shepard wrote:

No sooner were we thus set down and entered into church fellowship but the Lord exercised us and the whole country with the opinions of Familists, begun by Mistress Hutchinson, raised up to a great height by Mr. Vane too suddenly chosen governor, and maintained too obscurely by Mr. Cotton, and propagated too boldly by members of the Boston church... by means of which division by these opinions the ancient and received truth came to be darkened.... The principal opinion and seed of all the rest was this, viz., that a Christian should not take any evidence of God's special grace and love toward him by the sight of any graces or conditional evangelical promises to faith or sanctification, in a way of ratiocination (for this was evidence and so a way of works), but it must be... by immediate revelation in an absolute promise.

Shepard describes the basic proposition that cast Massachusetts Bay Colony into turmoil between 1634 and 1638. The decade of the thirties was a period of intense religious enthusiasm focusing on the question of ascertaining individual election or reprobation, and the issue was important since the churches and the secular ruling bodies were to be composed only of the elect. What people wanted was demonstrable proof of their election, and the debate surrounding the nature of that proof pitted the orthodox, who preached that a person's profession of faith and his/her good life were probable signs of election, against the antinomians (whom Shepard calls "Familists") who insisted upon a direct revelation from God. Puritanism, although securely within the embrace of Calvinism, tended to mitigate the doctrine of election/reproba-

15

The soul, taught such divines as Hooker and Shepard, was incapable on its own of earning election (or of resisting saving grace once God proffered it), but it could prepare itself for saving grace in a process of conversion. The individual-
properly guilt-ridden, remorseful, and desirous of salvation—was emboldened to hope for saving grace, which if God willed, s/he would feel infused into the soul. And providing that one did not presume to possess saving grace, one might be reasonably assured of it. The antinomians, whose chief spokesmen included Hutchinson, scoffed at such a scheme, saying that it was a "covenant of works" rather than one of faith (an accusation that depicted the orthodox as standing dangerously close to unreformed Christianity and to Arminianism). John Cotton, initially stressing human depravity and helplessness, disjoined the internal experience of grace from an external process; Hutchinson's faction propelled this position to the extreme by asserting that the elect maintained an immediate communication with God.

The wrangling and precisionism is perhaps lost upon the modern reader, but the significance of the Hutchinsonian controversy cannot be overstressed. It expressed the central anxiety of Puritanism, namely, how to know whether one was saved or damned. Put another way, Puritans were attempting to articulate a reliable way to coordinate their inner and outer lives, to reasonably predict the outcome of their striving after God's kingdom within a predestinarian framework. Everyone in the colony was touched by the controversy, and emotions were raised to a fever pitch. One woman drowned herself after becoming convinced that she was an incorrigible reprobate; neither the process of conversion nor a direct revelation worked to assure her, and the community would have taken these facts as prima facie evidence of her damnation.16

What is especially important to consider here is the way in which the orthodox position prevailed over the more popular (at least in Boston)
antinomian. The members of the Hutchinson faction who did not recant were charged by the civil leadership with heresy, a civil offense, and brought to trial. Until Hutchinson actually admitted to an immediate revelation from God, the case against her stood largely upon circumstantial evidence and theological hair-splitting. The latter was particularly notable for its distinctive misogynistic character, contributed in part by none other than Thomas Dudley:

Mrs. Hutchinson is she that hath depraved all the ministers and hath been the cause of what is fallen out, why we must take away the foundation and the building will fall. 17

Despite the involvement by prominent men, including Cotton, the heaviest blame for the disruption of the commonwealth devolved upon Hutchinson. No doubt possessed of a strong personality, Hutchinson was seen as an unruly woman whose will stood in need of breaking. Said Winthrop at her trial:

... you have maintained a meeting and an assembly in your house that hath been condemned by the general assembly as a thing not tolerable nor comely in the sight of God nor fitting for your sex, and notwithstanding that ... you have continued the same, therefore we have thought it good to send for you to understand how things are, that if you bee in an erroneous way we may reduce you that you may become a profitable member here among us .... 18

Thus, Hutchinson was arraigned not merely for holding an "erroneous" opinion, but for publicizing it. The fact that she assumed a teaching role became the foremost argument against her, especially when it became clear that she was an intelligent and articulate instructor. 19 In her own defense, she cited scripture to support her claim that mature women have the duty to teach the younger, but her prosecutors precluded the possibility of such instruction including theology. Again, Winthrop:
But you must take [scripture] in this sense that elder women must instruct the younger about their business, and love their husbands and not to make them clash . . . . it will not well stand with the commonwealth that families should be neglected for so many neighbours and dames and so much time spent, we see no rule of God for this . . . .

Quick to see in Hutchinson's case an inherent threat that other women might emulate her, Simon Bradstreet (the poet's husband) asked "whether you do think /holding forth at meetings/ is lawful? for then this will follow that all other women that do not are in a sin." When Hutchinson replied that her action was strictly voluntary, Bradstreet rejoined that she ought to "forbear it because it gives offence."

Clearly, the civil authorities attempted to discredit the antinomian position by tainting it with ad hominem (or better put, ad feminam) attacks upon an important but by no means solitary proponent. And in creating an atmosphere of mistrust and hatred of dissident women, they were immensely successful. The normally self-controlled Winthrop can barely disguise his loathing of Hutchinson, in his recollections after the trial. For Winthrop, the female mind is an oxymoron and Hutchinson, an unclean and pretentious hussy:

"What most suddenly diffused the venom of these opinions and vitails of the people . . . was Mistress Hutchinson's double weekly lecture . . . where after she had repeated the Sermon, she would make her comment upon it, vent her mischievous opinions as she pleased, and wraithed the Scriptures to her own purposes, where the custom was for her scholars to propound questions, and she (gravely sitting in the chair) did make answers thereunto. . . . [This custom] proved the Canker of our Peace, the ruine of our comforts."

Winthrop's portrayal hints at a deliberate attempt to reverse the public image of Hutchinson as a teacher and a healer, the latter stemming from her other occupation as a midwife. In this respect, the cruelest attack centered upon the tragedy of the remaining years before her murder.
in 1643. Mistress Hutchinson being big with child, and growing towards the time of her labour, as other women doe, she brought forth not one . . . but 30. monstrous births or thereabouts, at once; some of them bigger, some lesser, some of one shape, some of another; few of them any perfect shape, none at all of them (as farre as I could ever learn) of humane shape. 25

Thus was the final piece of evidence adduced to the case against the antinomian persuasion: it was wrong in the first place because like the multiple monsters of Winthrop's misogynistic fantasy, it was conceived in and brought forth by a woman. She dared to assume a public teaching role, and her Circe-like wit seduced an entire nation of "godly Magistrates." A woman who abandoned her natural vocation as a silent and submissive wife was certainly to be counted among the damned, another "proof" of the essential error of antinomianism. Silencing any further doubts was God himself, who in an expression of love for his faithful children, slew the brazen heretic and her family.

There were ominous lessons to be learned from the Hutchinson tragedy apart from the obvious futility of challenging those with the force of law on their side. Ideas were not to be separated from the person who propounded them; nor was one's salvation to be disjoined from fidelity to one's vocation. In presuming a public vocation, Hutchinson yielded to pride and vanity, vices that brought down Eve. Thus, she compromised her salvation. The connection to Eve, especially in respect to her irrational power over Adam and her fate to suffer in childbirth, was pronounced in Hutchinson's case. In the late forties and early fifties, the image of her as a scheming seductress continues to circulate, as Johnson's Wonder-Working Providence indicates:
... and there was a little nimbled tongued Woman among them, who said she could bring me acquainted with one of her own Sex that would shew me a Way, if I could attain it, even Revelation, full of such ravishing joy that I should never have cause to be sorry for sinne, so long as I live, and as for her part shee had attained it already.

Having tasted the forbidden fruit of special knowledge, the woman invites Johnson to do the same; and in a scene that could have inspired Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown," Johnson alone in the forest mulls over the temptation to heresy. Those not as strong as he, Johnson muses, succumbed to the wily women. Following Winthrop's account, Johnson says:

... the weaker Sex prevailed so farre, that they set up a Priest of their own Profession and Sex, who was much thronged after, abominably wresting the Scriptures to their own destruction: this Masterpiece of Women's Wit, drew many disciples after her, and to that end boldly insinuated herself into the favor of none of the meanest, being also backed with a Sorcery of a second, who had much converse with the devill by her own confession, and did ... utter many speeches in the Latin tongue, as it were in a trance. This Woman was wonted to give drinks to other women to cause them to conceive, how they wrought I know not, but sure there were monsters borne not long after . . . .

In all of the Wonder-Working Providence, one would be hard pressed to find as much vitriol reserved for a "heretic" as one finds for Hutchinson, with the possible exception of Thomas Morton of Merrymount fame. Clearly, Hutchinson's daring offended the colony's patriarchs to an extent unsurpassed in her equally voluble male colleagues, and the enormity of her doctrinal error was measured by her intellectual "weakness" and her power to entrance, both inherent in her gender. The insinuation of a deviant sexuality (expressed as a willing intercourse with Satan) reinforced the tenacious myth of women's essential uncleanness. Thus, the patriarchs brought to the surface their deepest suspicion of women's
power to unman them; they met that fear head on in public restatements of women's private role and in the ruthless suppression of women seen to deviate from it.

The only reference that Bradstreet makes to the controversy is an oblique one:

But some new Troubles I have had since the world has been filled with Blasphemy, and Sectaries, and some who havest been accounted sincere Christians have been carried away with them, that sometimes I have said, Is there any Faith upon the Earth? and I have not known what to think, But then I have remembered the words of Christ that so it must be, and that if it were possible the very elect should be deceived. 29

With characteristic sincerity, Bradstreet attests to her own confusion resulting from the discord; her affinities, however, clearly lie in the orthodox rather than the antinomian theological position. If this passage out of her journal does in fact refer to the events of the volatile thirties and forties, events which condemned her own sister to reprobation, we may then begin to infer the way in which Bradstreet personally resigned herself to their meaning. The sectaries (Hutchinson and later Sarah Keane) were self-deluded. To be sure, everyone was vulnerable to blinding pride and ambition, especially when such vices appeared in the guise of learning, piety, and enthusiasm; it was precisely to be able to discern between true and false learning and piety that one needed to be vigilant, to mistrust the purity of one's intentions for acting.

To the extent that the verse history, elegies, and quaternions emerged out of intellectual ambition (however doctrinally neutral they may have been), these poems may have seemed to Bradstreet in the 1650's to be dangerous, or at least frivolous, undertakings for a woman. Yet
nowhere does Bradstreet concur with the communal values in disparaging her sex, but she is conscious of the dangers of pride, traditionally a woman's chief vice for which the remedy is submission to the rule of her betters, God and her husband. In his well known Of Domestical Duties (1622), a compendium of sermons on married life, William Gouge asserted the venerated opinion that wives owe their husbands reverence and obedience; God ordained such a relationship in order to quell womens' naturally rebellious nature. So they must

purge out of their hearts pride, and selfe-conceit, thinking humbly and lowly of themselves, and that even in regard of their sex and the weaknesse thereof: and if the Lord have endued them with any gift above the ordinary sort of women, to note well their own infirmity and so lay them by their eminent gifts: thus by looking on their blacke feet, their proud-peacock feathers may be cast down.30

Bradstreet gives evidence in her journal that she was aware of this passage in Gouge, but she does not repeat his inept anaology with respect to gender:

It is reported of the pea cock that prideth himself in his fay feathers he ruffles them up, but spying his blacke feet, he soon lets fall his plumes, so he that glorys in his gifts and adornings, should look upon his Corruptions, and it will dampt his high thoughts. 31

Bradstreet was mindful that the bright plumage, arrogant strut, and "blacke feet" belonged to the male of the species, and thus hardly provided an appropriate metaphor to describe women. Still, she cannot have failed to absorb the underlying notion of a wife's fundamental subjection to her husband which extended even to suppressing her "eminent gifts" and "adornings," for these would have tempted a wife to put herself above her husband's authority. This was exactly what happened to Hutchinson, as Bradstreet no doubt ruefully noted. Gouge,
the English Puritan divine, observed that the properly ordered family, in which the wife functions in childlike submission to the husband, is a seminary of the Church and commonwealth. It is as a Bee-hive, in which is the stocke, and out of which are sent many swarms of Bees: for in families are all sorts of people bred and brought up: and out of families are they sent to the Church and common-wealth, a prescription which figured in the case against Hutchinson when Winthrop accused her first of violating the fifth commandment:

If we be the fathers of the commonwealth, and (the faction) of another religion, if you entertain them then you dishonour your parents and are justly punishable.

The notion of a child-like submission and humility which extended to requiring the suppression of skills not specifically domestic was invigorated in the image purveyed by the ministers of a feminine and thus passive Christian soul completely dominated by the husband, Christ. In her relationship to Christ, the soul is utterly abased and incapable of acting in her own behalf; she is a whore who is cleansed by the purifying and irresistible love of Christ who lifts her out of her filth to espouse her. This is traditional Christian imagery, to be sure, but to an age as much disposed to arguments of custom as to causal analysis, the image becomes a social fact. Gouge bases his theory of women's natural subjection to their husbands almost entirely upon the relationship of the soul to Christ; the natural state of marriage (which came into existence with the creation of Eve) is defined in terms of Christ's espousal of the church and the individual soul. A woman who refuses to submit is like a strumpet who refuses to abandon her sin, a disobedient daughter. Such had Hutchinson (and Sarah Keane) been, according to Bradstreet's own father and husband, with predictable consequences for her salvation, as well as for
the state. As Bradstreet noted,

A sore finger may disquiet the whole body, but an ulcer within destroys it, so an enemy without may disturb a commonwealth, but dissensions within over throw it. 34

If Hutchinson and Keane were unacceptable models of Christian womanhood, who provided a proper example? We may note that Johnson's Wonder-Working Providence, although replete with the holy exploits of the fathers of the commonwealth, recounts no heroic lives of women. Indeed, such a history does not record the achievements of "good" women precisely because they (the women) are hidden from public view; one supposes that we are to take the existence of such women for granted. Bradstreet herself testifies to the essential anonymity of women's lives, as well as to the way in which the notion of vocation translated into a policy of conduct for women, in "On my Dear and ever honoured Mother." The poem is worth noting in full here:

A worthy Matron of unspotted life.  
A loving Mother and obedient wife,  
A friendly Neighbor, pitiful to poor,  
Whom oft she fed, and clothed with her store;  
To Servants widely awful, but yet kind,  
And as they did, so they reward did find:  
A true Instructor of her Family,  
The which she ordered with dexterity.  
The public meetings ever did frequent,  
And in her Closet constant hours she spent;  
Religious in all her words and wayes,  
Preparing still for death, till end of dayes:  
Of all her Children, Children liv'd to see,  
Then dying, left a blessed memory. 35

Keeping in mind the specific meaning of "public meeting" (that is, that her mother went to church often), we have a picture of an exemplary Puritan woman. She is meek, self-effacing, obedient; her authority extends only to the instruction of children and servants, and her only excursion beyond the front gate is to attend religious services. Since Bradstreet usually
demonstrates an ardent personality in her verse, this poem is all the more remarkable for its lack of emotion and distinguishing detail. Without the help of the title, we would not automatically assume the poem to be about Bradstreet's own mother. Indeed, the poem reads more like a metrical version of Gouge's *Of Domestical Duties* than a description of a specific woman and beloved parent.

In sharp contrast to the bland Puritan woman, of course, was Elizabeth I, whom Bradstreet elegizes in 1643, the same year in which her mother and Anne Hutchinson died. Elizabeth seemed an iconoclastic figure to Bradstreet, very different from either the "good" woman (her mother) or the "bad" (Hutchinson). Perhaps Bradstreet thought of the queen as an acceptable alternative to the monstrous public woman; where Hutchinson had brought faction and error, Elizabeth united and fortified—proof that a woman could be public and "good" at the same time. Elizabeth, however, was an anomaly; she was one of the few women in history whose claim to publicity was legitimately rooted in the law, and she found herself thrust into the office of chief magistrate, an office for which women were traditionally judged unfit. Elizabeth's successes notwithstanding, women must be content with their natural roles of wife and mother. As Gouge said, a woman could consider that the faithful performance of her domestic duties constituted a public work, since the tranquility of the family contributed to the stability of the state.

Bradstreet's passion and anger in celebrating Elizabeth and in denouncing misogyny, compared with the restraint and simplicity in the poem about her mother, perhaps suggest a reluctance to let go of hope she expressed in "The Prologue" of combining homemaking and versifying. Few women, as far as she could see, ventured successfully
beyond their private role, and if salvation depended—as it certainly did—upon fidelity to one's vocation, then Bradstreet must look at versifying anew. It is the sense of a more pressing duty that increasingly takes over in the 1640's, changing Bradstreet's effort to stake her own worldly claim into a starkly selfless campaign to proclaim God's glory. The effect is Bradstreet's grafting of verse writing onto her domestic vocation can be seen in her turning away from the public voice genres after the 1640's and in the intensification of religious feeling in the private voice poems in the forties and beyond, including frequent renunciations of the world and the flesh. In "The Author to her Book," a poem most likely written between 1647 (the year in which Woodbridge sailed for England?) and 1650, or shortly thereafter, Bradstreet modestly shudders at the well-meaning audacity of friends "less wise then true" who snatched her manuscripts from her side and "expos'd [them] to publick view." Making use of a metaphor reminiscent of Spenser (a deliberate decision, perhaps) Bradstreet's "child" must submit to washing, grooming, and stretching before the mother can permit it to roam outside. Unlike Spenser's "child," however, Bradstreet's volume of poetry is "irksome in my sight," and altogether impervious to the poet's efforts to "amend" its "blemishes":

    In better dress to trume thee was my mind, 38
    But nought save home-spun Cloth, i' th' house I find.

Bradstreet's remonstrance to the "ill-formed offspring of my feeble brain" is to stay away from "vulgars" and "critics" and to "take thy way where yet thou art not known," implying that in this way the poet will escape public notoriety.
"The Author to her Book" has been held up as evidence that Bradstreet revised her work, possibly in preparation for a second edition of her poetry. No doubt a fantasy, unvoiced except for implications contained in the elegies on Sidney, du Baratas, and Elizabeth, was fulfilled in the publication of The Tenth Muse; but the fact remains that Bradstreet never again wrote verse history, political and cosmographical dialogues, or elegies celebrating the lives of the famous. "The Author to her Book" should be read as a statement of acute self consciousness, even shame, arising from seeing her verse in print. The fact of her "publicity" was unquestionably unsettling to her, for her fervent effort to distance herself from her published (or, soon-to-be-published) volume exceeds mere convention. Spenser expected that "Envie" would "barke" at his "child," that his "little booke" would suffer the scrutiny of a meticulous eye; but Spenser the "unkent" parent had no doubt about the intrinsic worth of his verse, despite its being "base begot with blame." Spenser’s concession to conventional humility ends there, for he fully expects that once read, the volume will be "past jeopardy" and will be followed by more volumes. Similarly, Robert Burton sends his Anatomy of Melancholy "into the open day" to roam "o'er the earth's wide surface." Spenser is the father of his book, Burton the master who sends his volume to an audience at large. The learned, the noble, and the ordinary "will try to con thy lore," says "Democritus Junior to his Book"; even the "ludeful matron," the "gorgeous countess," and the "dainty damsel" will be among the shocked and amused readers.

Behind Spenser's obsequiousness and Burton's humorous self-satire lies a conviction that their works will be vindicated by a worthy audience, and an assurance that as writers they will be included among an elite
fraternity. Such was neither Bradstreet's conviction nor assurance. The Tenth Muse, she suggests, has all the appearance of a bastard child of a poor mother: "You have no father," is Bradstreet's pronouncement, with which it would seem she has understood the futility and moral danger of a woman assuming a public voice, as well as the impossibility that a woman poet should be viewed with the same lens as a man. At the very least, given Bradstreet's time and place, her statement is more poignant for its indictment of herself than of her "rambling brat."

The context for Bradstreet's repudiation of her "worldly" efforts can be seen in her private verse and prose writings. Her overarching desires are stated fairly constantly throughout: to do good and to leave a personal mark upon the activities that engage her form a leitmotif that extends from her earliest known poem, "Upon a Fit Sickness" (1632) to the journals and poems of the late sixties. The wish to be made a "vessel fit for God's use," as well as to avoid "incroaching upon others conception because I would leave you children nothing but myne own" springs from the conviction that as one of the elect, she must "declare the Truth, not to set forth my self, but the glory of God," and that as a mother, she perpetuated her life in her progeny. Bradstreet is aware of her personal call to salvation—although the call is at times muffled in doubt—and of her particular lot to nurture a family in the love of God and obedience to his law. What binds together salvation and vocation for Bradstreet is the Puritan "covenant of faith" wherein a life well-led (good works performed) is a probable sign of "justification" (or God's arbitrarily bestowed saving grace) that results in amended behavior. Bradstreet gives typically Puritan expression to the relationship between
salvation and vocation as a debt owed to God:

If thou assist me Lord I shall
Return Thee what I owe. 44

The faithful performance of one's duty is the discharging of one's debt for salvation. For Bradstreet and her coreligionists, however, one can never be sure of doing enough or of having sufficient time in which to fulfill the responsibilities of one's vocation.

Thus, Bradstreet directs herself to God in urgent supplication during and after her frequent and serious bouts of illness, or upon the restoration of family members to health or safety. Having survived a life-threatening illness in 1632, Bradstreet pleaded:

O whilst I live, this grace me give
I doing good may be 45

and when her son, Simon, returned from England in July 1661, she expressed her gratitude by asking that

In both our hearts erect a frame
Of Duty and of Thankfulness,
That all thy favours great received
Our upright walking may expresse. 46

Conscious at all times of her absolute dependence upon God for the free gift of election, her earnest prayer is that "no longer bee my Dayes/ Then I may fruitfull be." 47 Trial by sickness, loss or diminution of estate, or the death of a loved one, all were to be received as spurs to a more assiduous application to duty, and as antidotes to complacency. Moreover, the obligation to verbalize one's dependence or indebtedness appears to be a concomitant element in performing the duties of one's vocation. Hence, in addition to her request for more time and more grace to "walk upright," Bradstreet also desires to "testifye my thankfullnesse not only in word but in Deed, that my Conversation may speake that thy vowes are upon me." 48
Humility thus vocalized constituted a confession of saving faith:

My thankfull heart with glorying Tongue
Shall celebrate thy Name

Lord whilst my fleeting time shall last
Thy Goodness let me Tell . . . 49

and

My thankfull heart with pen record
The Goodness of Thy God . . . 50

It seems clear that Bradstreet—like her mother, relegated to spend "constant hours in her Closet"—perceived that versifying could be reconciled to her private, domestic role. She saw that writing could be a medium for "doing good," so long as she did not presume to vaunt her "talents" or "ornaments." Writing, therefore, could be a part of her vocation. Her private, "domestic" verse sprang naturally from her condition as a woman, emerging at crucial times of testing (childbirth, death, separation, illness), and gradually (ca. 1650) showing evidence of the Puritan habit of looking inward for signs of God's saving grace.

Perhaps the clearest indication of Bradstreet's overall shift in poetic sensibilities is afforded by the juxtaposition of two sets of so-called "marriage" poems. The first group of four poems, consisting of "To my Dear and Loving Husband" and three verse epistles, was composed between 1638 and 1642, when the Bradstreet's still resided at Ipswich and when Simon and his father-in-law frequently traveled about on colony business. These poems were the product of Bradstreet's experimentation in learned forms, when she felt the "striving pain" to write great verse and when she envied the "sugar'd lines" of du Bartas and others. The effect of her
reverence for Elizabethan and early seventeenth-century poets is a virtual idealization of love, albeit married love, couched in language reminiscent of the metaphysical poets. The second group of poems was composed in the sixties, another period in which Simon's frequent absences upon official business caused her to feel a painful desolation. In this second group of poems, however, Bradstreet's emotions are not attired in the conventional ornaments: the classical imagery and the witty diction are absent, replaced by a plain style. The poet here is concerned about the serious issues of salvation for both herself and her husband, and the poems—like her journal entries—take on the form of a direct address to God. Indeed, the later marriage poems would seem to have been composed as a part of her customary journal exercise, for they are interspersed liberally among the prose entries.

"To my Dear and Loving Husband," which has been called Bradstreet's closest approach to a sonnet, is reminiscent of the passionate sentiment of the Canticle of Canticles, a favorite among the Puritans as an allegory of Christ's espousal of the soul (and the church). Here Bradstreet celebrates the intense reciprocal love between herself and Simon:

If ever two were one, then surely we.
If ever man were lov'd by wife, then thee;
If ever wife was happy in a man,
Compare with me ye women if you can.
I prize thy love more than whole Mines of Gold,
Or all the riches that the East doth hold.
My love is such that Rivers cannot quench,
Nor ought but love from thee, give recompense.
Thy love is such I can no way repay,
The heavens reward thee manifold I pray.
Then while we live, in love lets so persever,
That when we live no more, we may live ever.
Besides its lyrical purity, what is striking about the poem is Bradstreet's edenic image of marriage, suggestive of both the sentiments that Milton would later place upon Eve's lips, and the features of married bliss that he would ascribe to the prelapsarian relationship between the sexes. Bradstreet conveys the impression that her marriage to Simon has all of the depth of affection and physical passion of an ideal marriage. This point of view stands somewhat admirably apart from the typical expectation which did not make passionate love either a prerequisite to marriage or a necessary outcome of sexual union. "Looke not for Perfection in your relations," the Reverend Thomas Thatcher told young couples; it was enough to take a spouse whom one could come to love in time and in the familiarity of cohabitation. And although Puritans placed marriage at the center of human relations, they insisted in any case that conjugal love by subordinated to the love of God. Thus Edward Taylor reminded his wife of her place when he wrote to her, "My Dove, I send you not my heart, for that I trust is sent to Heaven long since, and unless it hath woefully deceived me, it hath not taken up its lodgings in any one's bosom on this side of the Royal City of the Great King, but yet most of it that is allowed to be layed out upon any creature doth safely and singly fall to your share." John Winthrop similarly besought his wife, Margaret, "My sweet spouse, let us delight in the love of eache other as the chief of all earthly comforts"; but he also recalled the secondary position she occupied in relation to his duties to God in the errand: "I am still detained from thee, but it is by the Lord, who hath a greater interest in me than thyself." Bradstreet implies as much when she enjoins her husband to continue in love so as to merit heaven's reward, but she
does not make an overt point about the supremacy of divine love. Rather, Bradstreet seems to confirm the wifely dependency imbedded in the idea of a husband's ennobling love. Bradstreet is a debtor; her feeling of completeness in Simon's love seems to reaffirm the notion that a wife--a woman--is made for God in her husband. But what is unique is Bradstreet's use of language usually reserved for a description of the spiritual relationship to God; here Bradstreet stands alone among the poets of the first generation in New England.

Similarly, the first verse epistle ("A Letter to her Husband, absent upon Publick Employment") argues Bradstreet's utter dependence upon her husband for her emotional well-being. The poet complains of her loneliness in the absence of her spouse:

> My head, my heart, mine Eyes, my life, nay more,  
> My joy, my Magazine earthly store,  
> If two be one, as surely thou and I, 57  
> How stayest thou there, whilst I at Ipswich lye?

and the poem turns on a clever conceit drawn from physical science and on the equation of the sun with her husband. It is winter, the proper correlative for her current feeling:

> I like the earth this season, mourn in black,  
> My Sun is gone so far in's Zodiak,  
> Whom whilst I 'joy'd, nor storms, nor frosts I felt,  
> His warmth such frigid colds did cause to melt.  
> My chilled limbs now nummed lye forlorn;  
> Return, return sweet Sol from Capricorn. 58

But he does not return, and the poet's only joy now must come from searching for his image in her children, "those fruits which through thy heat I bore/ . . . True living Pictures of their Fathers face." Simon's absence is unnatural, chilling--like the the effect of the sun's southward trek to the winter solstice:
141

O strange effect! now thou art Southward gone,
I weary grow, the tedious day so long;
But when thou Northward to me shalt return
I wish my Sun may never set, but burn
Within the Cancer of my glowing breast, 59
The welcome house of him my dearest guest.

The image of fecundity in the first verse epistle conveys the sense of the naturalness of physical passion and it depicts marriage in pre-Christian, pre-Puritan terms. Bradstreet would have the sun, her husband, stay in the northern latitudes until death separates them again, but even then "both [are] but one."

The sun figures differently in the second verse epistle ("Phoebus make haste"). Here the sun god is addressed directly and is requested to carry a message to the absent spouse, which is of course that he return to his "widdowed wife." Bradstreet feels as bereft of life as "those far scituate under the pole" who rarely see the sun and who "day by day long wait for thy arise." The poet, however, proceeds to argue that she is in a worse state:

Behold a Chaos blacker than the first.
Tell him here's worse than a confused matter,
His little world's a fathom under water,
Nought but the fervor of his ardent beams 60
Hath the power to dry the torrent of these streams.

One of the common features of the first and second verse epistles is the unabashed secular—even pagan—overtone. The third verse epistle ("As Loving Hind") returns to the imagery of the Canticle of Canticles, to which Bradstreet adds the more homely image of the mullet. In this poem, she compares herself to the deer, the turtle dove, and the mullet—each of which is a symbol of marital devotion and fidelity, for upon losing her mate, each will search for him, mourn his loss, and even die. Bradstreet selects land, air, and water creatures to represent the scope of her grief:
Return my Dear, my joy, my only Love,
Unto thy Hind, thy Mullet and thy Dove,
Who neither joyes in pasture, house nor streames,
The substance gone, O me, these are but dreams.  61

The poem ends with her repeated plea to her husband to return:

Together at one Tree, oh Let us brouze,
And like two Turtles roost within one house,
And like the Mullets in one River glide,
Let's still remain but one, till death divide.  62

and she signs it, "Thy loving Love and Dearest Dear,' At home, abroad,
and every where. A. B."

Modern anthologies of American verse typically use the early marriage poems to represent Bradstreet's best work, perhaps because the poems
fulfill our traditional expectations of women writers, but more because
the language in the poems is so atypical of Puritan poetic practice, unless
the writer is talking directly to God. The early marriage poems also
illustrate Bradstreet's inventiveness; the dramatic quality of the
poems emerges in the abrupt and argumentative tone, reminiscent of
metaphysical poetry, which she employs with great efficiency to convey
the frenzied, distraught state of the abandoned wife. The second
epistle demonstrates this:

Phoebus make haste, the day's too long, be gone,
The silent night's the fittest time for moan.  63

yet, seeing an opportunity, the poet immediately reverses herself and
begs

But stay this once, unto my suit give ear, 64
And tell my grief in either Hemisphere.

The poem's ending is symmetrically opposite to its opening, as the poet
having relieved her heart to Phoebus is suddenly speechless:

Tell him I would say more, but cannot well
Oppressed minds, abruptest tales do tell.
Now post with double speed, mark what I say
By all our loves conjure him to stay.

Bradstreet's skill is also evident in some finely wrought lines.
In the first epistle, for example, the dignified restraint of

I like the earth this season mourn in black

is balanced by the expression of genuine feeling that overflows the boundary of the pentameter couplet:

But when thou Northward to me shalt return,
I wish my Sun may never set but burn
Within the Cancer of my glowing breast,
The welcome house of him my dearest guest.

Thus Bradstreet allows the line to convey the contrast between emotion-chilling loneliness and expansive love. A final observation about technique in these early love poems must focus upon organization. "To My Dear and Loving Husband" has all of the compactness and economy of a sonnet; it consists of at least three independent units, each with a distinct rhetorical function: the first four lines assert the unique bond between the specific lovers by means of a mock challenge to other women to compare their lots with the poet's. The following six lines define the scope of love metaphorically (more valuable than gold, more refreshing than water, a debt that cannot be repaid except by the lover himself). These two sections prepare us for the closing couplet, an exhortation to continue to live in love so as to achieve immortality.

Conceptually, Bradstreet is not "Petrarchan" in the early love poems, since she clearly asserts the desirability of married love; for this reason, and for the fact that her husband is her "Magazine of earthly store," she is not altogether un-Puritan, either. Nevertheless, Bradstreet's intense spiritual and physical passion, as well as the claims she makes upon her husband suggest that the poet had difficulty in abiding by the Puritan
insistence upon "weaning the affections" away from creatures and fixing them primarily upon God. In the first verse epistle, for example, Bradstreet expresses indignation that her husband appears to prefer his job before his wife:

And if he love, how can he there abide? 69
My Interest's more than all the world beside.

Another sign of Bradstreet's early divergent point of view is her use of sensuous imagery to describe her own literal relationship, when Puritan preachers and poets employed such imagery only allegorically to describe the spiritual marriage of Christ and the soul. With considerable daring, Bradstreet reverses this Puritan practice by making the language of a mystical marriage serve the purposes of an earthly one.

The early love poems communicate the sense that Bradstreet was an intensely emotional woman whose attachment to her husband by Puritan standards perhaps verged on the inordinate (and significantly, these poems were not carried to England by Woodbridge for publication in 1650, but were included in the second edition after her death). Such an inference is borne out in still another poem addressed to Simon, "Before the Birth of one of her Children," which Bradstreet composed very likely between 1643-45—that is, shortly after her widowed father remarried and during her pregnancy with her sixth or seventh child. Obviously concerned about the very real possibility of dying in childbirth, Bradstreet uses the occasion to express her reluctance to leave her husband:

How soon, my Dear, death may my steps attend
. . . yet love bids me
These farewell lines to recommend to thee,
That when that knot's unty'd that made us one,
I may seem thine, who in effect am none. 70
The poet is oppressed with the fear that her husband—perhaps like her father—will remarry and consign her to existence as a distant memory.

As in those dark days of her husband's absence, Bradstreet turns to her children to recall the fervor of married love; this time, however, it is to remind her husband of her part in their creation:

Look to my little babes my dear remains.
And if thou love thy self, or loved'st me
These 0 protect from step Dames injury.

The poet resists the fact of the dissolution of marriage as much as she resists her own dissolution in death. There is an underlying bitterness in Bradstreet's melancholy reflections in this poem: her death is a kind of absence, but she fears it will not affect her husband quite the way his did her. She was the "loving Mullet, that true Fish" who lost all joy and the desire to live; he, on the other hand, will eventually "feel no grief," and his "loss shall be repaid with gains" in a new wife and family. It is as though she has perceived the imbalance in a relationship in which one partner is totally dependent upon the other, and in which the other ("the man more loved than life") determines the existence and worth of the first.

These sentiments of fierce possessiveness, unabashed physical desire, of reluctance to leave this life for another, of anger at the inequality of the partners' positions within the relationship, are all unique in Puritan poetry of the first generation in New England, and they testify to Bradstreet's somewhat defiant mood in the late 1630's and 40's.

The second group of poems relating to marriage were composed long after Bradstreet abandoned her more worldly desire to write in the vein of Sidney and du Bartas, and during a period of intense introspection. In these poems, Bradstreet shows quite a different face, for she has made an unquiet
peace with Puritan doctrine concerning marriage. The effect on the poetry is language virtually devoid of imagery, a tone of desperation (intimated in "Before the Birth of one of her Children") resulting from searching specific doctrines for reassurance, and a loss of the former playful argumentativeness. Further, the dignified pentameter couplet is replaced by the ballad stanza, as though Bradstreet has turned to the catechism and psalm book for material and meter. "In my Solitary houres," written during the bleak winter of 1661 when Simon was again on colony business (this time in England), contrasts sharply with the early "absence" poems. Here, the poet addresses God himself, and her attitude is of the properly humiliated Christian soul standing in abject supplication before an taciturn master:

O Lord thou hear'st my dayly moan
And see'st my dropping teares.
My troubles All are Thee before
My longings and my feares.

. . . . . . . . . . . . .

0 shine upon me blessed Lord
Ev'n for my Sav'rs sake
In thee alone is more then All;
And there content I'll take
0 hear me Lord in this Request
As thou before ha'st done
Bring back my husband I beseech
As thou didst once my Sonne. 72

God, whose purposes are hidden and inscrutable, is a being to be appeased, to be reminded of past mercies and the past performance of the suitor. Bradstreet recalls that she has always tried to be a pious Christian, and in times of severe testing she says "I've kept my Ground." What is important about this poem, however, is its conceptual conformity to Puritan doctrine: Bradstreet grants a position to God higher than that of her husband and
Seeing God in other creatures, including those closest to her is precisely what Puritanism demanded, so that as one of the elect she could avoid the pitfalls of extreme attachment—that is, idolatry and self-delusion. Directing the full flow of emotions to God through one's spouse was a corrective to over-dependence upon a mortal and finite creature on the one hand, and pride and self-importance on the other (since a partner might consider himself/herself indispensable to the happiness of the other, or—as in the case of "uppity" women like Hutchinson—a wife might overthrow her husband's authority). The result of such notions upon Bradstreet's point of view in the latter marriage poems is to alter the meaning of the central event in the poem. No longer is absence a "private" event between the two lovers; it is now a theologically pregnant issue upon which hangs the poet's confidence of possessing saving grace. Bradstreet no longer importunes Phoebus to deliver a message to her husband; rather she prays to God to strengthen her in this latest test of her fidelity to him:

O stay my heart on thee my GoD
Uphold my fainting soul
And when I know not what to doe
I'le on thys mercyes roll!

This shift in focus away from the relationship strictly between the spouses to the relationship between a married person and God suggests a modification in the poet's perception of marriage. It is a three-way partnership; and the husband is no longer "the man more lov'd then life,"
but rather "my dear friend,"

Him whom thou gavest me
That wee together may sing praise-
For ever unto Thee. 75

The notion of marriage as a partnership in the service of God echoes throughout the later group of marriage poems, and it is colored by the poet's conviction that sickness or absence—the events that prompt the poem's composition—are visitations of God's justice upon their transgressions. Simon's recovery from a fever, says Bradstreet, is entirely God's doing, for now both of them realize anew their complete dependence upon him:

Thou rais't him up I feared to loose
Regau'st me him again ....

and turning to Simon, she says,

Let thy obedience testefye
He taught thee by his rod.

And with his staffe did the support
That thou by both mayst learn
And twixt the good and evill way
At last thou mig'st discern. 76

Considered as a whole, the marriage poems of both the early experimental and later orthodox periods suggest the contradiction that was inherent in the Puritan concept of marriage, and which affected women in ways it did not reach men, for marriage (as an unequal partnership with a man) was God's purpose for creating woman in the first place. The Puritan insistence that the wife see God in her husband served to reinforce her dependence and subjection. On the one hand, Puritanism, in contrast to the Latin mind-set, elevated marriage to a social level above celibacy, implying at least the essential dignity of woman, as well as the potential sanctity of sexual union. Likewise, Puritanism asserted
a kind of female parity to men. On the other hand, Puritans themselves were convinced of the scriptural traditions restricting women to a subservient and menial position in the family, and it forbade them a public role and voice. Puritanism taught a woman that she had personal worth and an individual relationship to God, but it simultaneously undercut this message with its insistence that she bury her talents in favor of a more seemly submission and obedience to her husband. In theory, such a lot would make her happy: as Gouge saw it, equality between a man and a woman is really only "equity," that is a congruity in procreation and a "similitude" of authority in rearing children; otherwise, a wife is naturally inferior to her husband, and any other notion is a "fond conceit."

A Puritan woman therefore received conflicting signals. A Hutchinson or a Bradstreet saw in the doctrine of saving grace the possibility for self-expression; such women did not set out deliberately to overthrow the authority of their husbands or of the magistrates, necessarily; but in Hutchinson's case, self-expression was equated with rebelliousness and pride, the quintessential female weaknesses for which marriage was a corrective. Bradstreet may have suspected something of a rebelliousness in her own attitudes about marriage. On the one hand, scripture and her culture told her that she must depend upon a man (first her father and then her husband) for physical, spiritual, and emotional sustenance. Indeed, she was justified in calling Simon her "Magazine of earthly store." On the other hand, her faith forbade her from idolatry, and at the very least, from too much affection. Perceiving herself in an emotional bind, Bradstreet
expostulates (in "Before the Birth of one of her Children") against the implied freedom of the husband, as he cannot be destroyed by the loss of his wife. Her frustration during this period is analogous to her anger at the hegemony of poets and against the critics who would regard her verse either as the bastardization of other's work or as the unworthy product of an ambitious woman.

Bradstreet resolves her anger by turning inward to discern "twixt good and evil," for as Hutchinson demonstrated, rebellion against one's station took one down a dangerous path. What Bradstreet discovered was that God:

```
... thy Abode tho'st made with me
With Thee my soul can talk
In secrett places. Thee I find,
Where I doe kneel or walk.
```

Thus does the covenant of faith save her; converted from rebellion (that is, idolatry of her husband as well as the ambition to exploit her intellectual and artistic inclinations) Bradstreet loves her husband not less, but in the true perspective of his position as partner; likewise, she is "liberated" to another, more appropriate sort of self-expression that as a function of introspection, focuses upon her relationship to God.
NOTES

1 The term "orthodox" is used here to distinguish Bradstreet's faith from that of the antinomians or any other theological faction which the Massachusetts authorities deemed heretical.


5 Sun and clouds are frequent images Bradstreet uses to communicate her variable moods, as can be seen in an untitled poem dated May 13, 1657:

My winters past my storms are gone
And former clouds seem now all fled
But if they must eclipse again
I'll run where I was succoured.

In "Prose Journal", p. 227


8 Kenneth R. Ball sees the "morphology of conversion" as the "archetype for the order" of Bradstreet's later domestic verse, in "Puritan Humility in Anne Bradstreet's Poetry," Cithara, 13 (Nov. 1973), pp. 29-41.

9 White, p. 174.

10 White, p. 174.

11 Koehler, p. 163-4n; also notes Keane's censure, p. 227.

12 Koehler, p. 163-4n; White, p. 175.

13 King, pp. 445-467.

15 See Morgan and Pettit.

16 The years immediately surrounding the religious crisis saw a good deal of activity by women for whom the spiritual enthusiasm functioned to relieve the tension brought about by their effective exclusion from a public voice in secular and church matters. Thus argues Koehler, pp. 218-21.


18 "The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson," p. 312.

19 Koehler argues as much, p. 233.

20 "The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson," p. 316.

21 "The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson," p. 317.


23 Winthrop, A Short Story, pp. 207-8.

24 Koehler shows that Hutchinson was by no means alone in suffering her character to be destroyed. According to Koehler, the antinomian cause attracted a sizable number of women who, after Hutchinson's censure and excommunication were "punished" in similar psychological ways (p. 232).

25 Winthrop, A Short Story, p. 214.

26 Johnson, p. 134.

27 Johnson, p. 132.
With typical hyperbole, Johnson places the antinomian controversy within the apocalyptic struggle between good and evil. Now Satan, who is daily walking to and fro compassing the Earth, . . . wherefore he sets upon a new way to stop (if it were possible) this worke of Reformation. . . . as for instance first of a Woman, even the grand mistress of all the rest, who denied the Resurrection from the Dead, she and her consorts mightily rayling against learning, Perswading all they could to take heed of being spoyled by it, and in the meanie time, shee her selfe would dispute . . . . pp. 122, 128.


Gouge, Of Domestical Duties, p. 196.


Gouge, Of Domestical Duties, p. 17.

"The Examination of Mrs. Anne Hutchinson," p. 314.


Bradstreet, p. 167.

Bradstreet, pp. 155-58.

Thus argues John Aylmer in An Harborowe for Faithful and Trewe Subjects (Strassbourge, 1559) against the seditious attach by John Knox (The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women, 1558) against the moral and legal right of women to succeed to the throne. Knox asserted that "to promote a woman to beare rule, superioritie dominion or empire aboue any realme, nation or citie, is so repugnant to nature, contumelie to God, a thing most contrarious to his revealed will and approved ordinance, and finalie it is the subuersion of good order of all equities and justice" (p. 11). Knox saw women as "naturally and ordinarily incapable of ruling a state" because they were inherently weak and intellectually feeble. Women, according to this Calvinist zealot, were suffered by divine injuction to limit their authority to their children only; and in this they were further limited by virtue of the natural course of family life, when children grew up and left home. Knox reasoned that if women eventually lost the authority over their sons, and had none to begin with over their husbands, they could hardly be considered material for the throne (in which they would be granted authority over a nation of husbands and sons).

Against these arguments, Aylmer (in defense of Elizabeth I, who had just become queen as Knox brought out his untimely pamphlet) asserted that history and common law had never questioned the hereditary right of a woman to become the chief magistrate, and that there was nothing in
Christian doctrine to contravene this custom. Mary Tudor, as cruel as she was argues Aylmer, and now the beloved Elizabeth were entitled to reign, and their succession to the throne, no less than that of men, expressed God's will. Also, biblical history showed that women were indeed capable of the virtues of valor, wisdom, and cunning, necessary for the successful rule of a great nation. Women, noted Aylmer, have been known to preserve commonwealths where men have destroyed them.

Finally, Aylmer discusses the relativity of male authority over women with respect to the highest civil authority: a queen is subject to her consort in matters pertaining to marriage and children; but a consort is subject to his wife as queen of the nation.

Still Aylmer does not gainsay the preferability of a man over a woman for the job of chief executive, and he argues the utter unsuitability of women for ecclesiastical positions. A woman can become queen in a paroxysm of history, but never a preacher.

38 Bradstreet, pp. 177-8.
39 This claim is made by White, p. 268, and Stanford, Anne Bradstreet: The Worldly Puritan, p. 74. It is unpersuasively refuted by McElrath and Robb pp. ix-xxiv.
43 "In my Solitary Houre," p. 234.
44 "Upon a Fit of Sickness," p. 179.
45 "On My Son's Return . . . ;" p. 231.
46 "Deliverance from a Fitt of Fainting," p. 222.
47 "For the Restoration of my dear Husband from a Burning Ague," p. 229.


*P. L.*, IV, 440-91; 738ff.


p. 181.

p. 181.

"Another \(\text{second verse epistle}\)" p. 182.

"Another \(\text{third verse epistle}\)" p. 183.

p. 183.

p. 181.

p. 181.

p. 182.

p. 181.

p. 181.

p. 181.

The Puritan insistence upon "weaning the affections" has been explained by scholars beginning with Perry Miller. For a succinct discussion, see Daly, pp. 85-8.
74 p. 234.
75 p. 232.
76 pp. 229-30.
78 p. 233.
CHAPTER FIVE
"Puritanization" Continued: Poetry as Piety

We have seen that in order to reasonably assure herself of salvation, Bradstreet had to come to terms with her Puritan faith, a faith that aligned itself with the notion that gender defined social roles; thus, Puritanism permitted men to exercise a public teaching and governing voice, but consigned women to mute attendance at "public meetings" and to quiet, meditative hours in their "closets." Bradstreet's acquiescence to a submissive role appropriate to a woman was accomplished and maintained with considerable difficulty at times, for the world presented a powerful lure even to those whose hearts were most tenaciously set upon heaven. Bradstreet, in her prose meditations, expressed Puritanism's double view of material acquisitiveness. On the one hand, abundance is a sign of divine blessing upon the errand, and the apparent inequality of estate among individuals is simply God's providence for governing mankind:

A prudent mother will not cloth her little childe with a long and cumbersome garment, she easily forsees what events it is like to produce, at beast, but falls and bruises, or perhaps somewhat worse, much more will the alwise god proportion his dispensations according to the stature and strength of the person he bestows them on, larg indowments of honour, wealth, or a helthful body, would quite ouer throw, some weak Christian, therefore god cuts their garments short, to keep them in such trim that they might run the wayes of his Command-ment. 1

On the other hand, material goods are merely "huskes, for they haue no
kernell in them, and they that feed upon them, may soon stuffe their throats, but cannot fill their bellys, they may be choaked by them, but cannot be satisfied with them.\[2\] The statements imply the Puritan conviction that material estate is of itself meaningless unless it is applied to the betterment of the community and unless the individual understands that there is a durable estate to be acquired in heaven. In slightly more practical terms, some individuals appear to grasp these principles more easily than others, and it is to the former that God has entrusted both a stewardship of the world's good and the authority to manage and to govern, while the other less robust must trundle through life, dragging their handicaps with them in serene resignation to their divinely appointed lots.

This social dogma, given respectability by its theological basis, effectively transferred to the New Jerusalem what even Bradstreet herself intimated in "The Four Monarchies" were the political results of original sin—namely, a society of human classes wherein superiors govern inferiors. Thus, even the New Jerusalem, whose locus was presumably Massachusetts Bay, contained a necessary "corrupt" element which the patriarchs hoped and strove to convert into social cohesion. However, not even the assurance that God willed a hierarchy of superiors and inferiors sufficed to completely remove the pitfalls to which even God's elect were vulnerable, for one could not be absolutely certain that one's motivations for the use of wealth and power were always aligned with the higher goals of the community, which were the completion of the Reformation by establishing an ecclesiastic and civil polity to embody and preserve a purified Christianity. The great jeremiads of the 1660's attest to the anxiety produced by the increasing prosperity of the colony, as
pastors mindful of the communalism of the infant colony loudly protested what they saw to be a shift away from a godly spirit of cooperation toward flagrant individual acquisitiveness and the concomitant erosion of private piety and public virtue. 4

The Puritans rightly perceived that the lines of societal interdependence would unravel if rampant individualism were permitted to proceed unchecked. Yet the equilibrium afforded by the relationship between those with power and means and those who were society's "inferiors"—the poor, the mentally handicapped, and the spiritually damned—was possible only when everyone affirmed the divine pleasure in such an arrangement and when everyone believed in the relative egalitarianism of the afterlife where theoretically even the poorest of the poor could inhabit the ruby and diamond studded halls of heaven. Considering her social position, Bradstreet found it quite natural to uphold these rather smug premises; belonging to the colony's "upper crust," she was Mistress, not Goody, Bradstreet. Occasionally, she assumes somewhat the tone of the amazed grande dame beholding the harmony amid human diversity, which she explains with a platitude about God's will:

There is nothing admits of more admiration, then god's various dispensation of his gifts among the sons of men, betwixt whom he hath put so vast a disproportion, that they scarcely seem made of the same lump, or sprung out of the loynes of one Adam, some set in highest dignity, that Mortality is capable of, and some again so base that they are Viler then the earth some so wise and learned, that they seeme like Angells among men, and some againe, so ignorant and sotish that they are more like beasts then men, some pious saints, some incarnate Deuils, some exceeding beauty full, and some extremally deformedsome so strong and healthfull that their bones are full of marrow and their breasts of milk, and some again so week and feeble, that while they liue, they are accounted among the dead, and no other reason can be giuen of all this but it so pleased him, whose will is the perfect rule of righteousness. 5
And sounding an admonition that could have been intended for a truculent servant, Bradstreet performs the unctuous ministrations that privileged society has ever employed to quell the rebellious spirit of the lower classes:

He that would be content with a mean condition, must not cast his eye upon one that is in a far better estate then himself, but let him look upon him that is lower then he is an if he sees that such a one beares poverty comfortably it will help to quiet him, but if that will not do let him look on his owne unworthynes and that will make him say with Jacob, I am lesse then the least of thy mercys.  

The possibility that God had not willed suffering and poverty, much less the sophisticated structures of the Puritan social hierarchy, would not have occurred to Bradstreet and her contemporaries (only the so-called Levellers recognized these fallacies, and the New England Puritans despised them as atheists and anarchists). Nor did it apparently occur to most Puritans that if God had not willed Adam and Eve to sin and thereby to introduce sickness and suffering into human life generally, then he did not will misfortune's intrusion into particular human lives; the Puritans reasoned instead that suffering was lawful retribution for mankind's willing depravity and that by extension, civil governments were necessary to restrain and shape man's debased inclinations. A person of humble estate could take comfort in the thought that while s/he was inferior to one, s/he was simultaneously superior to another. In any case, s/he was enjoined to be grateful for whatever were the intellectual faculties or other favors God and bestowed, because as an inherently depraved being, s/he deserved little more than to be crushed into oblivion.

Of course, the rule of "relatives" applied to members of all social stations, although doubtless it fell heaviest upon the poor, the infirm
and other "weak Christians," for in acceding to the "correctness" of such notions, they yielded up any formal basis for change. The summary Puritan social theory, as Bradstreet acknowledges it, seemed perfectly just in the abstract, for men did not have to invent it; they merely discovered it to spring forth naturally in social intercourse and they read its ratification in scripture. Puritans simply articulated the law of nature with respect to human society as God's "perfect rule of righteousness." However, the individual and private application of the rule was altogether different, as Bradstreet well knew, since the line separating the elect from the damned was not always obvious, nor were the elect in exclusive possession of God's spiritual, intellectual, and physical gifts. We have already noted that the process of the preparation of the heart, otherwise called the process or morphology of conversion, aimed to help the individual discover whether or not s/he was counted among the saved. We have also seen that illness and loss of estate were properly considered signs of God's cleansing love toward those who felt themselves saved, and so were visited upon the elect to remind them of their essential dependence upon God's mercy. The need for personal assurance of saving grace did not prompt Puritans to engage in spiritual competition with one another; rather it encouraged individual accountability to God. Thus was Bradstreet able--even in the midst of comparative affluence--to look upon herself as abjectly inferior, as one who had continually to prove herself worthy of salvation. This "puritan" humility underlies virtually all of her verse and prose writings, especially those of her later years when she had experienced the full range of personal loss and was anticipating her own impending "translation" to heaven. At this point Bradstreet seems most determined to extirpate
from her conscious will any and all inclinations toward the world, which may be variously interpreted as material comfort and physical health, or doubts of faith and the prideful desire to write learned poetry. Like the authors of the jeremiads, Bradstreet renounces wealth, honor, and learning as goals to be attained for their own sakes; unlike the preachers, however, Bradstreet does not castigate the community, but instead portrays the struggle between conflicting values as occurring within the individual heart, her own. The outcome is always at best tentative, since Bradstreet remains on this side of death a member of the Church Militant, a pilgrim; but her hope is that God will convert her abjectness and spiritual poverty into salvation.

The importance of the foregoing considerations becomes clear when one considers the situation of the most visible class of "inferiors" and "weak Christians": women. Here, the Puritan idea of hierarchy threatened to crumble into hopeless contradiction, and it was maintained by force of cultural habit bred in a literal reading of scripture. The Hutchinson episode made abundantly clear that a woman, whom God had created for an ancillary and submissive role, could be as intellectually capable as a man and could be as desirous to fulfill that capability. This fact raised an important ontological question to which Bradstreet's age never gave an adequate response. Everyone agreed that the supremely economical creator has not squandered his gifts upon individual beings; indeed, he endowed each with precisely the powers s/he would need to fulfill the divine plan. It might have followed that far from being a monstrous aberration, an intellectually acute and ambitious woman was in fact called on to develop these characteristics—in accordance, of course, with the will of God. Thus had Rachel Speght concluded in 1617, while
refuting the standard definition of final cause in the creation of women.

Speght argued for a more visible female participation in bringing about
God's kingdom on earth: woman was made for God first, and then for man.

Says Speght:

"A woman's hands should be open according to her abilitie, in contributing towards God's service . . . . Her heart should be a receptacle for God's Word, like Mary that treasured up the sayings of Christ in her heart. Her feete should be swift in going to seek the Lord in his Sanctuary . . . . Finally, no power external or internall ought woman to keep idle, but to imploy it in some service of God, to the glorie of her Creator, and comfort of her owne soul. The other end for which woman was created, was to be a Companion and helper for man . . . ."

But the age interpreted the crucial phrase, "the will of God," in the misogynistic terms of the Old Testament and of St. Paul. As the Hutchinson case proved, the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of New England considered the Bible as much a sociological and political document as a theological and historical one.

Bradstreet never overtly accepted the idea of women's social and spiritual inferiority to men as an essential difference between the genders, although she acknowledged male preeminence in such endeavors as writing history and poetry. But even "preeminence" was not in Bradstreet's view an essential quality: "What difference the Sex, but only heat?" If the answer to this rhetorical question is "None," then Bradstreet is presented with the problem of inconsistency, since her expressed advice to society's inferiors flies in the face of her own experience: the lack of a legitimate role for a learned and poetically inclined woman did not sit well with the young Bradstreet (as is apparent in "The Prologue" and in "The Author to her Book"); the fact that she wrote anyway and in her writing expressed her dissatisfaction, however tangentially at times, makes
her a kind of critic or rebel, not so much against the Puritan spiritual
life as against a rigid hierarchical system that required a woman to
restrict or even deny her intellectual talents. Still, Bradstreet's
overriding preoccupation is her soul's salvation, expressed through the
Puritan dogma of predestination. Her need for reassurance most likely
was stimulated by the fate meted out to the dissident women in the
thirties and forties; it was certainly rooted in her belief in the random
but just dispensation of saving grace:

All the works and doings of god are wonderfull, but none
more awfull then his great worke of election and Reproba­
tion, when we consider how many good parents haue had bad
children, and againe how many bad parents haue had pious
children, it should make vs adore the Souerainty of god,
who will not be tyed to time nor place, nor yet to persons,
but takes and chuses, when an where and whom he pleases,
it should alsoe teach the children of godly parents to
walk with feare and trembling, lest they through vnbeleif
fall short of a promise, it may also be a support to such
as haue or had wicked parents, that if they abide not in
vnbeleif, god is able to grafte them in, they vpshot of
all should make vs with the Apostles to admire the justice
and mercy of god and say how vnsearchable are his wayes
and his footsteps past finding out. 12

Reassurance at all costs to worldly desires was of paramount concern
to Bradstreet, and if walking in God's ways "with feare and trembling"
required a perfect submission to divine law expressed publicly in scripture
and promulgated by civil authority, then Bradstreet perforce must turn
away from her "masculine" interest in history, cosmology, and philosophy,
and in the poetry of public voice. This is not to say that such interests
were expressly forbidden to women, only that Bradstreet would be more
likely to find the signs of her election in the works proper to her gender.
The proof of this "common sensical" inference was to be found in the
"negative" examples of such women as Hutchinson and Keane who persisted
in playing the man. Thus, in relinquishing her "masculine" interests,
Bradstreet consents to being an "inferior"—that is, one completely submissive to God and by extension, to the community's definition of her role. Bradstreet's words to the rebellious spirit now have very personal meaning and application: she must give up her yearning after du Bartas and Sidney, for their works are "too superior things" for her "mean Pen." She must consider the end to which the dissident women came, and she must be continually aware of her own unworthiness.

Bradstreet's verse and prose writings of the sixties reveal that the pattern of Puritan womanhood which she had recognized in her mother was now in its final stage in her own life. Having raised almost all of her "eight birds" to maturity, Bradstreet saw that the time was at hand to repair to her "closet" to spend constant hours "preparing still for death." The poem "In Reference to her Children," dated June 23, 1659, marks a crucial turning point in the lives of all women, menopause. For Bradstreet, the biological change signaled the end of her active life in which pregnancy, childbirth, and nurturing provided the only definitive role outside of being a companion to her husband. Of course, Simon's social role, much less his progenerative powers, would not wane with age or the "loss" of his children; indeed, he continued to rise in prominence, eventually becoming governor of Massachusetts. He also remarried after Bradstreet's death and began a new family. But for Bradstreet, biological and social roles were inseparable, and menopause meant not just the end of her procreative power, but more important perhaps, the diminution of an already drastically restricted right of a woman to power and authority, namely, the authority over her children. This latter loss is precisely what "In Reference to her Children" dramatizes so poignantly. It is a farewell poem delivered by a profoundly loving mother.
who is reluctant to "let go" not only of her children--these she knows must "fly" on their own--but of her own life which biology has so thoroughly shaped and which is now about to become part of a distant past that she will later remember in "Contemplations" as an autumn evening. In the meantime, she expresses her grief and her fear at this auspicious moment:

O would my young, ye saw my breast,
And knew what thoughts there sadly rest,
Great was my pain when I you bred,
Great was my care, when I you fed

If birds could weep, then would my tears
Let others know what are my fears

My throbs such now, as 'fore were never:
Alas my birds, you wisdome want,
Of perils you are ignorant

O to your safety have an eye

"Breeding" and "Feeding," terms inseparable from pain and care, appropriately communicate Bradstreet's sense of her own womanly purpose which she has embraced and carried out with loving fidelity: this is what her children must remember, for they are the product of that work and in their budding lives she will attain a kind of immortality that belies the message her body now gives her. Having made her earnest declaration, Bradstreet turns to consider her own future, and here we get a sense of what retirement meant to the Puritan woman:

Mean while my dayes in tunes Ile spend,
Till my weak layes with me shall end,
In shady woods I'le sit and sing,
And things that past, to mind I'le bring.
Once young and pleasant, as are you,
But former toys (no joyes) adieu.
My age I will not once lament,
But sing, my time so near is spent. 15

Thus Bradstreet announces that the rest of her life will be taken up
with solitary meditation and poetry, until death carries her "from the top
bough . . . Into a country beyond sight,/ Where old ones, instantly grow
young,/ . . . And/ No seasons cold, nor storms they see." "In
Reference to Her Children" springs from an experience of aging and physical
change that is uniquely female; but Bradstreet uses the experience as a
springboard later on to consider the more general issues of the transitori­
ness of life and the world's pleasures, and the certainty of death. It is
significant, moreover, that after her childrearing duties are complete,
she is left with the one commitment she desired to follow from the outset--
poetry. But she will not take up where she left off decades before,
chasing after other kinds of "birds," those "high flown quils, that soare
the skies"; instead, she will bend her thoughts to the Puritan questions
of election, reprobation, doubt and faith, and the flesh versus the spirit--
contrarieties that best express the struggles of her own heart in the
final years of pilgrimage. In doing so, she will exercise a maternal role
in a new way, for her verse and prose meditations will be a legacy by which
her grown children can "gain some spiritual advantage."

If a single term can distinguish Bradstreet's verse of the 1660's,
it must be the term "meditative," for as a general rule the verse is
characterized by a quiet, dignified tone. Typically, Bradstreet is alone
with her thoughts; a specific event sparks her speculation upon spiritual
significance, but without loss of genuine human emotion. The result is
verse in which powerful feeling undergoes a transformation into faith,
like the conversion of matter into energy, sometimes—as in "Contemplations"—falling just short of mystical. We may note, for example, a poem that recreates the suddenness and trauma of the fire that destroyed her home in 1666, "Upon the Burning of her House." Bradstreet's capacity to restrain her grief—actually to redirect her grief away from herself and to transform it by faith into a kind of tentative tranquility—enables her to survey the ruins of her house without losing composure. Indeed, what is striking is the sense we get of a dignified silence; she is here a topographical poet, walking silently amid the debris and we follow her gaze as it pauses fondly upon familiar objects:

And here and there the places spye
Where oft I sate and long did lye,
Here stood that Trunk, and there that chest
There lay that store I couunted best
My pleasant things in ashes lye
And them behold no more shall I.
Under thy roof no gvest shall sit,
Nor at thy Table eat a bitt.
Nor pleasant tale shall 'ere be told
Nor things recouunted done of old.
Nor Candle 'ere shall shine in Thee
Nor bridegroom's voice ere heard shall bee
In silence ever shall thou lye.

And then she adds with perfect balance and economy,

`Adieu, Adieu, All's Vanity. 18

It is her conviction of the spiritual importance of the event coupled with her fidelity to details as they impinge upon her sight and memory that make "Upon the Burning of Her House" so thoroughly absorbing (and her resignation so believable in spite of the "pat" conclusion). The poem ends in a lengthy affirmation of faith in divine wisdom to make sense of the extraordinary event, which is precisely that a catastrophe is the visitation of God's justice upon her sins and lapses in the struggle against worldliness. In this case,
the destruction of the poet's home reminds her of the ephemeral nature of worldly estate and the proximity of death, so that she may realign her sights upon a heavenly destiny:

Farewell my pelf, farewell my Store.
The world no longer let me Love
My hope and Treasure lyes Above. 19

If Bradstreet's explanation for disaster seems to us enlightened moderns as pat, artificial, and even harsh, we might do well to consider our own phenomenalism. Our mechanistic and impersonal gods are certainly more horrific that the divine bogeyman of the Puritans--at least, they felt encouraged to talk to him. Nevertheless, to state that the ordinary Puritan believer applied the simple remedy of faith to even the most complex injuries is to admit the obvious. The pain of loss and separation was assuaged by the belief that an all-wise father touched each person to the core, with an aim to bring about a kingdom of goodness and peace. A person might be afflicted, but s/he could take comfort in the conviction that s/he played an indispensable role in God's plan, even if the plan were imperfectly known or seemed far from realization. Then there was always the inevitable escape to the permanent tranquility of heaven where one would await the final and promised transformation of the unregenerate world. This eschatological outlook was not unique to Puritanism; but the Puritans manipulated it with specific consequence to their social thought (as we earlier noted) and more important, with the effect of providing a circuitous means of comforting the elect: evil--or at least, misfortune--fell to everyone, but the damned characteristically refused to accept it from the hand of God as an instrument of their conversion. Instead, they persisted in their presumption to know what was in their
own best interest and to question and even deny God's wisdom. Recalcitrance, therefore, was a dangerous sign which an aspiring saint must eradicate even in the midst of searing emotional pain. The problem for the Puritan believer who was ever watchful over his/her soul's progress and who recorded it in journals and in poems was not to deny or ignore the pull of emotion, but to demonstrate that saving grace was actually present and at work, enabling the individual to apprehend God's providence in the event. Admittedly, such a resolution still begged the ancient question, "Why, O Lord?" But the Puritans appeared not particularly disturbed that this was the case. What mattered was the attitude of the believer toward the event, since in the absence of an immediate communication from God (which possibility the New England Puritans rejected when they condemned antinomianism), one's attitude was the final measure of one's relationship to God. The literary result of such intense self-examination in the solitude of one's soul is verse inspired by a specific event in which the speaker is the center of attention. Frequently, the poems are addressed to God, but just as often they are soliloquies--dramatic monologues which consist of the speaker's recognition and resolution of a spiritual problem and which convey the sense that the speaker is thinking aloud. The verse also typically communicates the sense of its being designed expressly as an affirmation of faith. Hence, the poems frequently contain tonal elements of probing uncertainty and confidence combined with the structural elements of the formal meditation and the sermon.

We may see the foregoing ideas at play in virtually all of the verse Bradstreet wrote during the sixties, but the emphasis on the operation of saving grace is especially clear in "Of The Vanity of all Worldly Creatures,"
written most likely in the late forties. The poem opens abruptly, reminiscent of the "metaphysical" abruptness of the early marriage poems:

As he said vanity, so vain say I
O vanity, o vain all under skie. 21

The lines conjure the image of the speaker as just having finished the last words in Ecclesiastes, having just closed the book, and now is about to reflect upon the implications to herself. We are present as the poet deliberates with her own soul. Bradstreet, however, is engaged not so much in convincing herself of the validity of the complaint in Ecclesiastes, for simple observation tells her that the world is corrupt and that the evil seem to prosper while the good languish. Rather, Bradstreet is disturbed by the conclusion drawn in Ecclesiastes that a good person's only recourse is to bind himself in a pact of survival with his family and to endure all vicissitudes with an emotionless equanimity. Bradstreet's response is unequivocal:

What is it then? to do as Stoicks tell,
Nor laugh, nor weep, let things go ill or well:
Such Stoicks are but stocks, such teaching vain:
While man is man, he shall have ease or pain. 22

Stoicism is a philosophical quagmire which seems to have entrapped the scriptural writer, according to Bradstreet. She offers a way out by means of a

... path, no vultures eye hath seen.
Where lions fierce, nor lions whelp hath been,
Which leads unto that living Christa!1 fount,
Who drinks thereof, the world doth naught account. 23

Defeatism and languor are the logical results of human effort in a world perceived as decidedly biased against the good. Bradstreet suggests that faith overcomes life's treachery and disappointment, but that it is hidden and must be sought. Once possessed, it transforms the soul:
Bradstreet gives the impression of presenting a riddle (we learn that faith is like gold, but it is more enduring; like earthly pleasures, but more delightful, etc.), and the rhetorical questions—a favorite device of hers—contribute to this impression. To the regenerate soul such as hers, the answer was obvious to the inquiry,

Where shall I climbe, sound, seek, search or find,
That Summum Bonum which may stay my mind? 25

"Of the Vanity of all Worldly Creatures," therefore, seems to be designed as an exposition of faith already possessed, or a special revelation already received. Ecclesiastes provides the controversy for which saving faith is particularly designed. Bradstreet asserts that mankind's escape from numbing anguish (and historical determinism) lies not in some elixir, but in the "Christall fount"; not in some talisman, but in "This pearl of price, this tree of life, this spring."

The believer may not see the world transformed in his lifetime, but faith assures him that he will "reign a King . . . and wear his Crown unto eternitie." 27

"Of the Vanity of all Worldly Creatures" is a kind of manifesto, --although certainly not in the strident voice of Michael Wigglesworth on the same subject --a kind of Puritan Nicene Creed which lays out the alternative theory to cynicism. Unlike the Catholic poets, Bradstreet prefers the glorious, resurrected Christ to the suffering one; hence the traditional iconography depicting Christ commiserating with human pain
is absent, supplanted by the traditional pictorialism of the last days and the heavenly Jerusalem in which Christ's divine omnipotence and righteous anger seem to overshadow his tenderness and mercy. The Catholic typology portraying Christ the person interacting with mankind is replaced by the solitary believer, offspring of the ancient Israelites, who makes his way through a hostile wilderness. This "Puritan" image revives the antagonism between the world and the spirit as a conflict of opposing epistemologies, and Bradstreet the Puritan perceived that her human nature made her a resident of these two realms. The world "knew" by means of "feeling knowledge" (that is, sensation, emotion, poetic inspiration or imagination, reason), whereas the spirit "knew" by means of understanding, faith and hope. Unlike her attempt in "The Four Elements" to achieve a "posy unity" of natural forces, the poems which focus upon the person of faith do not harmonize the world and the spirit; Bradstreet keeps them in complete and total opposition while at the same time trying to subjoin the former to the latter. Moreover, in suggesting that the conflict is between opposing ways of perceiving and knowing, Bradstreet places it entirely upon the plane of the soul (rather than extending it, as did the patriarchs, into a geopolitical struggle between Christ and Antichrist).

The emphasis upon the believer, combined with the essential eschatological outlook provided by faith and hope, in Bradstreet's case makes for an autobiographical poetry in which she is the \textit{dramatis persona} and in which the solution to the uncertainties of human life is foregone. This "patness," however, offsets the element of real struggle in which Bradstreet felt frequently engaged, against a worldly vision. The Puritan spiritual life was ultimately about the triumph of faith, and the discovery
by the elect of their own salvation. Hence, Bradstreet's poems
communicate the sense of there being a milestone, a marker of a particular
battle scene where the poet as a kind of latter-day Daniel has wrestled
with the lions. "Of the Vanity of all Worldly Creature" suggests the
theoretical opposition of the world and the spirit, but for Bradstreet
the struggle took place virtually every day within the confines of her
own "Closet"—her home, her family surroundings, her own mind. Nor was
the outcome always assured:

The reason why Christians are so loth to exchang this
world for a better, is because they have more sence then
faith they see what they injoy, they do but hope for that
which is to Come. 30

As the poetry of the 1660's amply reveals, Bradstreet was frequently
buffeted by tragedy, giving her logical reason to "curse God and die."
This was a period delimited on the one side by menopause and on the other
by her own death (in 1672) and punctuated by many serious illnesses and
the death of loved ones, all of which threatened to overturn her "settled
heart." Bradstreet does not suppress her emotions:

And live I still to see Relations gone,
And yet survive to sound this wailing tone;

My bruised heart lies sobbing at the Root. 31

Rather, she attempts to organize them under the ensign of faith which directs
her to posit what she cannot "see" with the eyes of reason. The poem
"In Memory of my dear grand-child Elizabeth Bradstreet" reveals the
difficult reconciliation the poet has made to affliction and God's ordaining
of it which belies its stoical tone:
Farewel dear babe, my hearts too much content,
Farewel, sweet babe, the pleasure of mine eye,
Farewel fair flower that for a space was lent,
Then ta'en away unto Eternity.
Blest babe why should I once bewail thy fate,
Or sigh thy dayes so soon were terminate;
Sith thou art settled in an Everlasting State.

By nature Trees do rot when they are grown.
And Plumbs and Apples throughly ripe do fall,
And Corn and grass are in their season mown,
And time brings down what is both strong and tall.
But plants new blown, to have so short a date,
Is by his hand alone that guides nature and fate. 32

The first stanza gives the orthodox Christian response to death, a response born out of the epistemology of faith and hope; its position in the poem suggests that is was so thoroughly imbued in Bradstreet as to be virtually automatic. The stanza, of course, also deals with the specific person, an innocent child who deserves nothing less than eternal happiness. That wish is turned into fact by faith and disallows mourning. The second stanza, however, launches into a general speculation about the purpose of a child's death (expressed metaphorically in the nature imagery) and the poem assumes a darker tone. Death, says Bradstreet, is the natural completion of growth; but a child's death defies the course of nature, and therefore it must occur by a direct providence. This resolution is quite acceptable in terms of its orthodoxy, but what is strange and perhaps quite revealing is its position in the poem. One might have expected to find the stanzas in reverse order so that Bradstreet's genuine grandmotherly grief is answered by the full explanation of faith. Instead, we are left to ponder the inscrutability of a God who arbitrarily preempts the natural law of his own creation to take the life of a child. We have the sense that the hidden path of faith is not free of the fierce lion after all.
"The Flesh and the Spirit," although undated, was probably written in the midst of the rapid succession of tragedies which took the lives of three grandchildren and a beloved daughter-in-law (between 1665 and 1669). Like the memorial poem to Elizabeth Bradstreet, "The Flesh and the Spirit" contains an undercurrent of restlessness and tension that offsets its pat dogmatics. Unlike her role in the later elegies, Bradstreet's position here is not as a mother or grandmother, but as a kind of Puritan Everyman whose eternal fate hangs in the balance of the old polarities—we may add, recollected in a meditative moment:

In secret place where once I stood
Close by the Banks of Lacrim flood
I heard two sisters reason on
Things that are past, and things to come;
One flesh was call'd, who had her eye
On worldly wealth and vanity;
The other Spirit, who did rear
Her thoughts unto a higher sphere.33

In this poem, Bradstreet seems to reach back nearly twenty years to her method in "The Four Elements" where she depicted the elemental and oppositely poised forces of nature as sisters who vie for supremacy but who are finally prevented from doing so by the intricate network of interdependence among them—what Bradstreet termed "posy unity." "The Flesh and the Spirit," however, seems to suggest that such harmony in human nature is impossible, since the two sides represent mutually exclusive epistemologies. "Flesh" asks

Sister . . . what liv'st thou on
Nothing but Meditation?
Doth Contemplation feed thee so
Regardlessly to let earth goe?
Can Speculation satisfy
Notion without Reality? 34

Indeed, can speculation (meditation/contemplation) produce true ideas—ideas that do not need verification by reason, which is "Flesh"'s standard?
What does the soul know, and why should it want such knowledge?

Dost dream of things beyond the Moon
And dost thou hope to dwell there soon?
Hast treasures there laid up in store
That all in th' world thou count'st but poor? 35

The implication is that "Spirit" craves to escape from history, from the limitation of the material world, and by extension from the lure of material estate and from the unceasing tides of the emotions. "Spirit" tacitly affirms this implication when she expatiates upon the sort of knowledge she possesses, employing the opulent iconography of Revelation:

The City where I hope to dwell,
There's none on Earth can parallel;
The stately Walls both high and strong,
Are made of precious Jasper stone;
The Gates of Pearl, both rich and clear,
And Angels are for Porters there;
The Streets thereof transparent gold,
Such as no Eye did e'er behold,
A Chrsytal River there doth run,
Which doth proceed from the Lambs Throne;
Of Life, there are the waters sure,
Which doth proceed from the Lambs Throne:
Of Life, there are the waters sure,
Which shall remain for ever pure,
Nor Sun, nor Moon, they have no need,
For glory doth from God proceed:
Nor Candle there, nor yet Torch light,
For there shall be no darksome night.
From sickness and infirmity,
For evermore they shall be free,
Nor withering age shall e'er come there,
But beauty shall be bright and clear. 36

Bradstreet juxtaposes but does not harmonize the claims of the flesh and the spirit. Whereas "Flesh" bids "Spirit" to "Come, Come, Ile show unto thy sence/ Industry hath its recompence," adding, "What canst desire, but thou maist see/ True substance in variety," "Spirit rejoins,

Mine eye doth pierce the heavens, and see
What is Invisible to thee. 38
"Spirit" actually never debates with "Flesh"; the more combative of the two, she merely preempts "Flesh" with angry commands for silence:

Be still thou unregenerate part
Disturb no more my settled heart. 39

"Faith" is harsh, strident; her declarations of war upon "Flesh," accompanied by her resolve to make "Flesh" a captive communicates the sense of anxiety that she is herself vulnerable to enslavement to the base drives for acquisition and fame. This fear has been realized historically, as we have seen in "The Four Monarchies": the history of mankind consists of an unremitting stream of depravities the result of man's willing surrender to the base imperatives of the flesh. Yet, the history that Bradstreet recounts in "The Four Monarchies" is that which preceded the "New Dispensation" of the Christian era; the message that "The Flesh and the Spirit" communicates is that saving faith does not necessarily preclude a backsliding into depravity. The only preventive measure that can be taken by the aspiring saint is a constant vigilance, made possible by meditation, and an unshakable act of the understanding and the will to seek after heaven:

For my ambition lyes above,
My greatest honour it shall be
When I am victor over thee
And triumph shall with laurel head,
When thou my Captive shalt be led. 40

The sense we get from "The Flesh and the Spirit" and from her prose writings of the period is that Bradstreet's retirement from her active life was far from the golden age of quiet contemplations that she had prognosticated in "In Reference to her Children." Rather, she is solidly locked in a continuing battle for her salvation. We are struck by the vehemence of her feeling during this period. Bradstreet seems bent
upon affirming a dichotomous relationship between the soul and the body, and by extension between faith and reason, when Puritanism itself sought a detente between them. "Spirit," for example, denies that she is even related to the body:

\[
\text{For from one father are we not,}
\text{Thou by old Adam was begot,}
\text{But my arise is from Above,}
\text{Whence my dear father I do love.}
\]

And in the journal we read that Bradstreet experienced sweetness in the affliction of her body:

\[
\text{For I hope my soul shall flourish while my body decayes,}
\text{and the Weakness of this outward man shall be a means to strengthen my inner-man.}
\]

Certainly, Bradstreet languished in physical and emotional pain. Under these circumstances, an absolute faith in the providence of God would be sorely tried. She admits,

\[
\text{Many times hath Satan troubled me concerning the verity of the Scriptures, many times by Atheisme how I could know whether there was a God, I never saw any miracles to confirm me, and those which I read of how did know but were feigned.}
\]

Nevertheless, the epistemological issues that she raises are not simply personal; they are questions that flow out of the Puritan insistence upon inner assurance of saving grace. What must the soul know to be saved? How does it know it? and, How reliable is that knowledge? Reason informs the soul of the existence of God by means of the "wondrous workes . . . and the vast frame of the Heaven and the Earth," but faith—that ability to see the unseen (according to Bradstreet)—is a special bequest from God who enables the soul to worship him as a triune deity and as a savior who reserves a place of greater splendor than the earth. Bradstreet's hunger for such knowledge is expressed as an introspective search which at all times is threatened by the world's distractions—or more precisely
put, by reason's fallibility. Such a search, suffused with anxiety and mistrust of the self and expressed in journals and in poems, is (as part of the morphology of conversion) Puritanism's only claim to ritual, placing Bradstreet among its early and prolific practitioners in New England.

The crown jewel of Bradstreet's meditative and "ritualistic" verse is "Contemplations." Written probably around the same time as "The Flesh and the Spirit," "Contemplations" is vastly more complex, calling into play a number of Puritan assumptions and sensibilities: the notion derived from Augustine that there remains in postlapsarian man a light to carry him through nature and the self to God; the inclination to see the world typologically and allegorically; and the sense that Adam and Eve's surrender to the desire to know as God knows has permanently warped reason, making it even more susceptible to material blandishments than it was in its primordial innocence.

All of these considerations take place in the wilderness—the appropriate place for meditation—which Bradstreet recreates out of her memory. Thematically, "Contemplations" centers upon the conventional polarities of time (mutability) versus eternity (stasis), and sensory knowledge versus faith. But these theoretical oppositions acquire meaning and direction by the poem's structure. Bradstreet makes use of thirty-three stanzas of seven lines each (six iambic pentameter lines and an Alexandrine, rhyming ababccc—a Spenserian hybrid which she may have derived from Phineas Fletcher's The Purple Island, 1633) which seems well suited to her purpose of progressing through a sequence of natural scenes that give rise to the conflicting claims of the world and the spirit. Together, the stanzas have the force of narration and debate; individually, they are
picturesque vignettes upon which the poet musingly lingers. Within many stanzas Bradstreet effects a conceptual and rhetorical division between the first four lines in which she describes the physical scene, and the final three wherein she responds emotionally or offers a spiritual analogy. The effect of this strategy is to move beyond simple pictorialism to a series of miniature meditations, a kind of Puritan rosary, if such a comparison may be ventured.

Bradstreet's reliance in "Contemplations" upon the mode of formal meditation has been suggested by a few scholars, as has the Puritan assimilation of Catholic methods of meditation been documented. Bradstreet's method here, however, is not analytical in the strict Ignatian sense, for she does not rigorously adhere to the prescribed sequence of composition of place, consideration of the verities, and colloquy, in that order. Rather, she seems to roam at large, stopping and circling back through these various stages. Thus "Contemplations" more strikingly resembles Augustine's forays (in Book X of his Confessions) into the memory, understanding, and will. Still, an overall pattern of movement is apparent in the poem: a consideration of nature leads to a consideration of man's place in nature, which in turn sparks a comparison between nature's splendor and man's depravity. From there, Bradstreet consults history for an interpretation of man's condition, and this ultimately produces an act of faith--when nature is recognized as merely a type of perfection, rather than perfection itself--and a rejection of worldly ambition. The poems culminates in her famous declamation, "O Time the fatal wrack of mortal things . . . ."

The notion of nature as a type of perfection is critical to an
understanding of "Contemplations," as are the qualities of myth and drama
—all of which prevent the poem from being merely a remembered excursion
through the woods to which is appended a desultory treatment of
conventional themes. We may note beforehand Bradstreet's thoroughly
Puritan disposition to view nature "emblematically":

The spring is a lively emblem of the resurrection,
after a long winter we see the leafless trees
and dry stocks (at the approach of the Sun) to
resume their former vigor and beauty in a more
ample manner then what they lost in the Autumn so
shall it be at that great day after a long
vacation when the Sun of righteousness shall
appear those dry bones shall arise in far more
glory, then that which they lost at their creation,
and in this transcends the spring, that their
leafes shall never fail nor their sap decline. 49

The notion that eternal truth can be suggested by nature, but will
always "transcend" it, springs ultimately from Augustine's conviction
that a remnant of man's original understanding endures despite the
ravages of sin. What Bradstreet does in "Contemplations" is to go
through a process of discovery by which this fact is finally uncovered,
thus shedding fuller light than in her earlier poems upon the
relationship of reason and faith.

The poem opens with her admiration of nature's beauty. Throughout
roughly stanzas one to nine, Bradstreet is the landscape artist; her eye
gliding from a panoramic vision of the whole to specific points of
interest: the oak tree, the sun, the cricket and grasshopper. Intellection
up to this point occurs principally on the lower levels of sensory
apprehension and emotional delight. "I wist not what to wish," she
says, almost breathlessly. Nature has committed, as it were, a "holy
rape" upon her imagination which is sparked into seeing elementary
resemblances to man. The sun is like a strong man who runs a race, like
a bridegroom to the earth which he impregnates and makes fertile.

Bradstreet acknowledges here what her imagination is doing— that which primitive man had done for generations before God revealed himself as one and wholly "other"—namely, deifying nature, animating it with a divine essence. Fully conscious of the direction to which sensation and emotion are taking her, Bradstreet acknowledges it and moves away:

Soul of this world, this Universe's Eye,
No wonder some made thee a Deity:
Had I not better known (alas) the same had I.

Hail Creature, full of sweetness, beauty and delight.

A higher faculty has saved her from the error of anthropomorphism which escalates into idolatry; at the same time, it has made her conscious of the impulse to believe and to worship. Bradstreet calls reason into play which tells her that a being more powerful than either herself or nature is responsible for all that is. Thus, throughout the first nine stanzas, Bradstreet iterates a desire to "sing," to verbalize her wonderment.

Love, a feeling of unity with nature (expressed initially to the sun in the notion of a shared material essence: "All mortal here the feeling knowledge hath") must be directed at the creator rather than the creatures.

Stanzas eight and nine are pivotal, for Bradstreet now sees that all of the creatures, vegetative and animal, worship their creator according to the rules of their nature. She noted earlier that the oak tree broke its "shell of horn" to grow up into the heavens; now she hears

. . . the merry grasshopper . . . sing,
The black clad Cricket, bear a second part,
They kept one tune, and plaid on the same string,
Seeming to glory in their little Art.
Encouraged by their example, she attempts to offer adoration to God by means of a uniquely human act: a song or a poem. Yet, she feels prevented from doing so by some internal impediment:

To sing some Song, my mazed Muse thought meet.
My great Creator I would magnifie,
That nature had, thus decked liberally:
But Ah, and Ah again, my imbecility!

Shall Creatures abject, thus their voices raise?
And in their Kind resound their makers praise?
Whilst I as Mute, can warble forth no higher lays?/

Thus Bradstreet sets forth the central issue in the poem: to define mankind's purpose. All of nature's creatures function in individual and collective rhythm and harmony; only man seems incapable of such harmony. The highest of the creatures, therefore, would seem to be a misfit and an interloper upon the world scene.

Bradstreet's pessimistic conclusion in "part one" is followed by her inquiry into the history of human origins as recorded in Scripture, in order to account for the "imbecility" she felt in her attempt to worship God. Once again, Bradstreet is the pictorial artist, recreating the dark and forbidding scenes immediately after the fall from grace. It is a depressing vista: Adam and Eve have yielded up their sovereignty over nature and have become "naked thralls." Reason, which faculty raised them above the creatures, is now irreversibly damaged by the folly "to be more wise," and is now capable of misguiding their wills. The proof of this fact lies in the subsequent history of man, represented in Cain's disordered understanding which results in fratricide, war, and the building of walled cities. At the same time, nature remains essentially unaffected; while man wallows in self-inflicted depravity,
nature floursish, causing Bradstreet to observe sadly in stanzas
seventeen and eighteen:

When I behold the heavenes as in their prime,
And then the earth (though old) stil clad in green,
The stones and trees, insensible of time,
Nor age or wrinkle on their front are seen;
If winter comes, and greeness do fade,
A spring returns, and they more youthfull made;
But man grows old, lies down, remains where once he's laid.

By birth more noble then those creatures all,
Yet seems by nature and by custome curs'd,
No sooner born, but grief and care makes fall
That state obliterate he had at first:
Nor youth, nor strength, nor wisdom spring again
Nor habitations long their names retzin,
But in oblivion to the final day remain.

Bradstreet has now arrived at a turning point. She could adore
nature in its perfection, yet she can never possess this perfection
for as Adam's descendant she remains outside its workings. She could also
curse her own existence and await death. But what remains of reason's
original power to see through the world of material being cries out
against oblivion. Reason, that small light that retains only a fraction
of its original brilliance and is a fundamental component of man's nature,
bursts through Bradstreet's intellectual impasse, enabling her to see
that the creatures' worship of God is unconscious, merely "feeling knowledge,"
and therefore "unwilling." Man, however, exists to perform a higher
function--willing adoration--and to this end he still retains something
of an original sovereignty over nature:

Shall I then praise the heavens, the trees, the earth
Because their beauty and their strength last longer
Shall I wish there, or never to had birth,
Because they're beigger, and their bodyes stronger?
Nay, they shall darken, perish, fade and dye,
And when unmade, so ever shall they lye,
But man was made for endless immortality.
Rescued from fatalism and despair, Bradstreet now exercises control over her heretofore "rapt" emotions. The synthetic power of her imagination, guided by right reason, now sees nature symbolically: looking out to the horizon—rather than up, as she did at first and thus felt herself dwarfed by the creatures—she views the river and its denizens to move linearly toward the sea. This view, extended through stanzas twenty-two to twenty-five, occurs to her to be an

Emblem true, of what I count the best,
O could I lead my Rivolets to rest,
So we may press to that vast mansion, ever blest.

Reason has completed its task of extricating the poet from her "thralldom" to the depressing facts of history and from the narrow confines of sensory knowledge. But she is still left with a "thousand buzzing fancies" and the unfulfilled desire to organize them in a song of adoration. Once again, nature presents a creature which Bradstreet transforms into an appropriate emblem. The song and flight of the nightingale suggests what she desires most but feels denied as long as she continues in the flesh. Only faith in a revealed destiny (in her election to reside with God) and death itself can liberate her.

Remarkably, "Contemplations" in the inquiry into scriptural history fails to allude to Christian events and the poet makes no attempt to discuss specific articles of Christian faith which would make for a clearer transition between the role of reason to awaken hope and the role of faith to supply the missing facts surrounding a tranquil life after death. Yet, the central Puritan preoccupation with reprobation and election moves through the poem like a shadow. Bradstreet rivets
her attention to the central fact of man's irreversible depravity
for which only individual election and the comforting knowledge of it
(which she expresses as having one's name engraved on the white stone)
are the only escape. Bradstreet's purpose in the poem seems to be
multiple. First, she recounts the spiritual and intellectual history
of mankind beginning in the benighted and "atheistical" pagan past
(which Bradstreet expects us to understand begins with Cain and continues
to the Christian era). At the same time, "Contemplations" cannot be
rightly called a philosophical and historical essay (the latter designation
belongs to "The Four Monarchies"), since Bradstreet is not concerned
with metaphysical systems created by specific individuals in secular time.
Rather, the intellectual and spiritual progress of man is depicted as
unfolding within the microcosm of Bradstreet's mind, so that in the second
place, she is recounting a personal history. Bradstreet therefore, presents
a complex narrative essay which places the explanation for individual
human failings and limitations within the larger context of man's fall
from grace—a perfectly orthodox point of view. Unaided by faith, reason
can guide Bradstreet only to a tentative apprehension of God, based upon
a view of nature that sees creatures as types of ideas. To the extent
that her knowledge of God is incomplete, however, she is still vulnerable
to the possibility that reason in its impaired state may misguide her
understanding and will into accepting the material world as the only
reality. This possibility is realized in the lives of those individuals
especially who experience little or no suffering (or, as in the
case of the writer of Ecclesiastes, who fail to accept suffering as a
means of conversion to God). Hence, the final Puritan block is in place
in "Contemplations" in Bradstreet's little allegory of the mariner who
deceives himself into assuming that he is a "Master of the seas" by sailing only upon calm waters.

Reason, therefore, liberates and tyrannizes. Suffering opens the soul to the realization of its inherent depravity and alerts it to the danger of too much dependence upon reason and the material world. From here, the morphology of conversion swings into action, providing that the sufferer's name is "grav'd in the white stone": the individual is moved to a profound sorrow for sin and to a longing for God's law (which is to be found in Scripture). In turn, God floods him/her with a palpable sweetness and comfort, and the reassurance that at the end of the excursion through the wilderness, s/he will be "translated" to heaven.
NOTES

1 Bradstreet, p. 220.
3 p. 207. On the misuse of wealth Bradstreet observes:
   The gifts that God, bestows on the sons of men, are not only
   abused but most commonly employed for a clean contrary end,
   then that which they were given for, as health wealth and
   honour, which might be so many steps to draw men to god in
   consideration of his bounty towards them, but have driven them
   further from him, that they are ready to say, we are lords
   we will come no more at thee If outward blessings be not as
   wings to help us mount upwards, they will certainly prove
   clogs and weights that will pull us lower downward.

4 Miller, Errand into the Wilderness, pp. 1-15; Bercovitch, The
American Jeremiad, pp. 3-30.
6 Bradstreet, p. 204.
7 The intense earnestness characterizing Bradstreet's perception of
the role of suffering is amply apparent in her journal for Sept. 30, 1657,
where she seems to crave punishment for even her most fleeting thoughts
about material commodity. At this time she experienced a severe recurrence
of a chronic physical condition that while it immobilizes, also imparts
a kind of sweetness:
   I desire not only willingly but thankfully to submit to him
for I trust it is out of his abundant Love to my straying
Soul which in prosperity is too much in Love with the world.
I have found by Experience I can no more live without
correction then without food. Lord with thy correction give
Instruction and amendment, and then thy strokes shall be
welcome, I have not been refined in the furnace of affliction
as some have been, but have rather been preserved with Sugar
then brine, yet will he preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.

8 The quality of "Puritan humility" in Bradstreet's verse has been
observed by Kenneth Ball, "Puritan Humility in Anne Bradstreet's Poetry,"
Cithara, 13 (Nov. 73), pp. 29-41.
9 A Mouzall for Melastomus, p. 11.
   ... the final cause, or end, for which woman was made, was
to glorifie God, and to be a collateral companion for man
to glorify God, in using her body, and all the parts, powers, and faculties thereof, as instruments for his God's honour . . . .

10. Speght, p. 12. (Emphasis mine)
12. pp. 206-7. Bradstreet appears to allude to the notion of a "half-way covenant" whereby "the children of any baptized individual could themselves be baptized regardless of whether either parent had or had not been admitted to full communion in the congregation" (Bremer, The Puritan Experiment, pp. 144-47). Aimed specifically at second generation Puritans, the "half-way covenant" was devised in the sixties to counteract the increasing drift among the young away from church membership.
13. Thus bringing to fruition Bradstreet's earlier expressed sense (in "Before the Birth of one of her Children") that a man's life, unlike a woman's, continues in an upward path despite the decease of a spouse.
14. p. 185.
15. p. 186.
17. p. 215.
19. p. 237. In the prose meditation (p. 203), Bradstreet observes: Had not the wisest of men, taught vs this lesson, that all is vanity, and vexation of spirit, yet our owne experience would soon have speld it out, for what do we obtain of all these things, but is with vanity and vexation, and if we loose them, it is with vanity and more then vexation, so that he haue good cause often to repeat that sentence, vanity of vanities vanity of vanities, all is vanity.
20. Pearce in The Continuity of American Poetry, p. 24, describes Bradstreet as a poet of the private rather than of the public or communal event.
21. p. 159.
22. p. 160.
According to Keller, writing itself expressed Bradstreet's desire for intellectual status; her Puritanism thus encouraged her, but gender roles restricted such imaginings entirely to the "plane of the soul."


Stanford, Anne Bradstreet: The Worldly Puritan, p. 100.


p. 200.
p. 168.
p. 168.
p. 169.
p. 169.
p. 171.
pp. 171-2.
p. 172.
p. 173.
p. 174.
p. 174.
The need that Puritans had to know whether or not individuals were elect grew out of their obsession to build a church—a society—composed exclusively of the elect. Anyone might feign election by claiming to have the true, reformed faith and by leading an outwardly good life, but church membership required a confession of conversion from a life of sin (even if s/he did nothing more serious, as in Bradstreet's case, than lie to parents or gaze too long in the looking glass). And church membership was a requisite for participation in the fellowship of the great errand. What linked the individual, private life (and what made private piety so crucial) to the public myth was the required confession, and we have noted that on the basis of a gender stereotype, women were excluded from assuming a public role in this communal ritual. Although ostensibly invoked to relieve the "weaker sex" of the "burden" of public display, the practice of accepting a woman's confession of faith behind closed doors (with perhaps only a minister and the husband present) rather than before the whole assembled church, shut her off from the full drama of the myth; and it reinforced the impression that the New England project was "masculine"—or men's work—both in concept and in execution. As though whispering their abridged lines from backstage, Puritan women were expected to play no more than a supporting part as breeders and feeders, to use Bradstreet's words, notwithstanding the concession by some that a wife "hath as noble as soule as a husband": Thus, a
woman's spiritual life, centering on the question of personal assurance of election, had no other public significance than to regulate her outward behavior to conform to her role as a silent and submissive helpmate. The errand into the wilderness was, at least for Bradstreet, largely a metaphor of the internal, private struggle against individual sin, rather than of the geopolitical task of planting a Christian garden.

Recognizing those implications, some scholars caught up in the revisionist frenzy to paint a benign face upon New England Puritanism have suggested that the emphasis upon individual responsibility for sin, coupled with the insistence upon rigorous introspection, effectively liberated Puritan women to write and to publish. Such a suggestion ignores the fact that Bradstreet is the only woman on record as having written poetry in early seventeenth-century New England, and although we can assume that women likely kept journals as Bradstreet did, we do not know who these women were. Something other than Puritan individualism "permitted" Bradstreet to write: like Margaret More Roper, Bradstreet's intellectual curiosity blossomed under the singular care of an interested and sympathetic father. Yet the theoretic spiritual equality given to women was in practice undercut by the pervasive sexual biases to which this same father subscribed. So long as a woman remained quiet, withdrawn, and obedient while fulfilling every duty appropriate to a wife and a mother, she might "get away" with writing verse--provided as well that she did not embrace some specific heresy. We would expect, therefore, that Puritan attitudes about gender, perhaps before attitudes about individual responsibility, ultimately shaped women's writing; and this assumption is borne out in Bradstreet's verse. For Bradstreet was ever aware of being
a woman in the male preserve of poetry, and this gave rise largely to a squeamish self-consciousness that regularly diverted her attention away from her topic. In the case of "The Four Monarchies," her task required a degree of learning and technical skill beyond her expertise at that point; her avowed weariness of the poem may have indicated that she feared she had wandered too far in an alien field. All of this changed as she discovered her voice as a daughter, wife, mother, and spiritual child of God. Puritan spiritual life with its iconography of the solitary believer before a demanding God, leased her a parcel of friendly and familiar territory, off to the side of the public garden and hidden from public view.

One is tempted to speculate that Bradstreet might have gone on writing learned verse—that with practice, her limp might have metamorphosed into a confident gait—had the Hutchinson affair with all of the strident and long-resounding misogynistic rhetoric not intervened in the thirties and forties, or had Bradstreet's own father and husband not been such assiduous prosecutors of the woman. But, these were not the circumstances; and with a view to saving her own soul, Bradstreet eventually acquiesced in the womanly role she respectfully but dispassionately described in the elegy to her recently deceased mother. In writing about Hutchinson and Bradstreet (they were surely acquainted with each other), Anne King observes that there are two sorts of "influential women." The first "stands up for her beliefs, without bothering about opinions or consequence; the second "is more usual: intelligent, often creative, keeping her good position in life by a small compromise each day . . . , she usually manages to adapt to the majority opinion just enough to remain beloved and not unduly troubled by
conscience." Hutchinson is an example of the charismatic first sort, according to King, while Bradstreet represents the more quiescent second. Bradstreet is "the most creative of these amiable compromisers," a "man's woman" who was ever conscious of being Thomas Dudley's daughter and Simon Bradstreet's wife. King is correct in her overall assessment of Bradstreet's self-image as it can be known through the poems and the journals. Yet, although we may feel disappointed that Bradstreet chose the path of less resistance to the Puritan patriarchy by avoiding open confrontation with it, we ought not to feel disdain for her way, nor should we chide her for what she could have done to be more outwardly heroic. For in assessing Bradstreet's and Hutchinson's divergent responses to their womanly situation, we are assessing their temperaments as well as their specific predicaments. Hutchinson was attracted to exegetics and to the practical application of theological questions; she had a lawyer's mind, as well as a lawyer's rhetorical skills. Bradstreet, on the other hand, was engaged by wider philosophical issues, and she found them to spring up in the events of every day, as well as in the learned historical and cosmological treatises that she read in her father's library. These are not qualitative (nor by any means, mutually exclusive) differences. Given the mood of New England in the thirties, and Hutchinson's extroverted personality, it was perhaps inevitable that she wound up at the center of the doctrinal storm, though had it not been for her gender, the controversy might not have been so acrimonious. That being the case, however, Bradstreet perhaps saw that she had nothing to gain by alienating her father and her husband, two of the magistrates charged with protecting the errand.
A more important consideration in accounting for Bradstreet's "way" is the fact that she was apparently highly susceptible to English mores governing parents and children. The idea that finally all authority comes from a divine father, and that both civil and clerical authorities are father surrogates, figured in Hutchinson's trial. She managed to elude the charge that by promulgating her doctrines she was a disobedient child, yet her own attachment to John Cotton (which was suggested to be the reason for her transplantation to Boston from England) was that of an adoring daughter. Leverenz and Koehler point out separately that Puritan fathers (and mothers) expected an extreme deference from their children that extended well into a child's adult years. Stone recounts the recollection of John Aubrey (fl. 1642) in England that

\begin{quote}
Gentlemen of thirty and forty years old . . . were to stand like mutes and fool bareheaded before their parents; and the daughters (grown women) were to stand at the cupboard-side during the whole time of their proud mother's visit, unless (as the fashion was) leave was desired, forsooth, that a cushion should be given to them to kneel upon . . . after they had done sufficient penance standing.
\end{quote}

There is no evidence to suggest that Bradstreet was herself such a "proud mother" to her own children; quite the contrary, her tenderness toward all the members of her family is the hallmark of her personality as manifested in her writings. Nevertheless, her relationship to her father, as we have noted throughout, was particularly strong: it was probably her most significant and influential relationship, equal to—if not surpassing—that with her husband. It was to Dudley, that "whip and maul," that Bradstreet felt she owed her entire intellectual curiosity and training:
Most truly honoured, and as truly dear,
If worth in me, or ought I do appear,
Who can of right better demand the same?
Then may your worthy self from whom it came.
The principle might yield a greater sum,
Yet handled ill, amounts but to this crum;
My stock's so small, I know not how to pay,
My Bond remains in force unto this day;
Yet for part payment take this simple mite,
Where nothings to be had Kings loose their right
Such is my debt, I may not say forgive,
But as I can, I'lle pay it while I live;
Such is my bond, none can discharge but I,
Yet paying is not payd until I dye.

It was Dudley's swift remarriage in 1644, after his wife's death that may have prompted Bradstreet to wonder about Simon's future should she die in childbirth: the "loss" of her father perhaps caused her to fear the "loss" of a husband to another woman. Finally, it was to Dudley that Bradstreet owed her religious conviction:

[His] love to true Religion e'er shall shine.
My Fathers God be God of me and mine.

The feelings of dependence, affection, and indebtedness clearly played a major role in causing Bradstreet to defer to masculine expectations of womanly conduct, and these feelings were easily transferred to a husband and ultimately to God. We may note that among Bradstreet's favorite types is the sun which she calls the source of life on earth, the power which makes the female earth fecund, and which she variously employs to symbolize her husband, Christ, and God the father. Indeed, Bradstreet's spiritual progress can be best understood in her own description of a filial dependence upon God to grant her saving grace. When she says that "I . . . came into /New England/, where I found a new World and new manners, at which my heart rose, But after I was convinced it was the way of God, I submitted to it," she is as much as admitting that she felt that she was obeying the command of a divine father. Her obedience would be
required countless times after, when her father and husband uprooted the family to settle in increasingly more isolated parts of the colony or when pain and sickness took their toll upon her body:

Among all my experiences of gods gracious Dealings with me I have constantly observed this that he hath never suffered me long to sit loose from him, but by one affliction or other hath made me look home, and search what was amisse. So usually this hath been with me that I have no sooner felt my heart out of order, but have experienced correction for it, with most commonly hath been upon my own person, in sickness weakness, pain, sometimes on my soul in Doubts and fears of Gods displeasure, and my Sincerity towards him. Sometimes he hath smote a child with sickness, sometimes chastened by losses in estate, and these Times (thro: his great mercy) have been in them times of my greatest Getting and Advantage, yea I have found them the Times when the Lord hath manifested the most Love to me. Then have I gone to searching, and have said with David Lord search me and try me, see what ways of wickedness are in me, and lead me in the way everlasting: and seldom or never but I have found either some duty neglected which he would have performed, and by his help I have laid vows and Bonds upon my Soul to perform his righteous commands. 10

The notion of an exacting God who requires obedience unto the last punctilio and who would go so far as to "smite" a child in order to punish a parent, gives witness to an unsavory severity in Puritan spirituality, notwithstanding the "Manna" that followed chastisement. The marked egocentrism and opportunism in Bradstreet's attitude toward suffering, however, springs from the Puritan perception of the individual as an "untoward child" in need of remonstrance from a father who hates sins and yearns for the individual's purification. All misfortune, therefore, was to be accepted "Thankfully and Joyfully as in greatest mercies."

A picture has been painted of a deferential and submissive Anne Bradstreet who was largely in conformity with Puritan orthodoxy (her stated views on the nature of society also contribute to this impression). How, then, is she "influential," as Anne King has suggested? The claims of
some scholars that Bradstreet in her love of nature adumbrated the Transcendentalists and the English Romantics cannot be seriously advanced. Bradstreet's penetrating eye in "Contemplations" is not Emerson's "transparent eyeball" any more than is Vaughan's retreat to an infantile innocence the same as Wordsworth's neoplatonism in "Intimations of Immortality." Bradstreet placed the flesh and the spirit in absolute contradiction, unlike Whitman, and she made the spirit subject to a wholly "other" being, God. Finally, Bradstreet's understanding of human nature was totally conventional: as "Childhood" illustrates, man was not born in innocence and then hardened by experience; rather he was born in utter depravity and was subject from the beginning to the base inclinations of the flesh. Only saving grace, infused arbitrarily from without, could make him eligible for eternal happiness.

In short, Bradstreet—as with the other Puritan writers—reveals more differences than similarities to subsequent poets. Nor did Bradstreet's example prompt a "school" of women poets to emerge following the publication of her works (a further testimony, perhaps, to the rigor of the "law of domination and of subjection" that required women to repress their talents).

Bradstreet's "influence" lies in her revealing to us how a public ideology rife with sexual biases affected the poetic sensibilities of an individual, and here Bradstreet reveals her extraordinary, quiet courage and resourcefulness. When she perceived that the ordinary poetic modes and voices were beyond her grasp—when she saw that the fraternity of learned poets would not admit her membership—she turned to the material of her own experience and extracted from it the same grand issues that occupied the male masters. "The Four Monarchies," the ill-fated project
in the manner of Raleigh, pales before "Contemplations," the learned essay of her later years wherein the question such as Donne posed in his Holy Sonnet 12 ("Why are we by all creatures waited on/... being more pure than I,/ Simple and further from corruption?") is made more dramatic in being posed by a woman. For Bradstreet showed that a woman stands in relation to the creatures of nature and to nature itself as a master, and that she is called to redemption. In "Contemplations," Bradstreet is the solitary believer representing all other believers; in the Edenic wilderness, she is a kind of new Eve, free of the scriptural baggage and fully empowered to communicate with her creator without a male intermediary. It was on the level of the spirit that she discovered the ancient disparity between the genders to be neutralized, and this may have contributed in some subtle way to her execration of the flesh. In any case, the spirit housed the imagination which, like Philomel, could not be restrained from flight.
NOTES

1. Bolton, quoted in Leverenz, p. 83. Paraphrasing Ambrose, Bolton continues to say that "Soules have no sexes . . . In the better part they are both men." As we have already noted, Bradstreet refers to the salubrious effects of suffering as "a meanes to strengthen my inner man" (p. 226).

2. Keller, p. 27.

3. King, pp. 463-64.


5. Koehler, pp. 11-15; Leverenz, pp. 70-9ff.


7. "To her Father with some Verses," pp. 183-84.


9. [Prose Journal], p. 216.

10. [Prose Journal], p. 216.

APPENDIX

A Chronology of Bradstreet's Private Verse

Like the list provided by Anne Stanford in Anne Bradstreet: The Worldly Puritan (pp. 125-27), the present chronology represents an estimate of the dates of composition of the undated private verse. This estimate is based upon a consideration of language patterns, allusions to events in the prose journals, and internal evidence within the poems.

1632 Aged 19, Bradstreet is taken seriously ill; she writes "Upon A Fit of Sickness," her earliest known poem.

1635-36 The Dudley's and the Bradstreet's move from Newtowne to Ipswich. Until 1643, Simon Bradstreet is frequently called away on colony business. Bradstreet probably composed "To my Dear and Loving Husband," as well as the three verse epistles.

1643 Bradstreet's mother dies; the poet composes "On my dear and ever-honoured Mother."

1644 Thomas Dudley remarries, and by 1647, has two children. In 1644-45, Dudley's and Bradstreet's move from Ipswich to Andover; Bradstreet is pregnant for the fifth or sixth time. "Before the Birth of one of her Children," "Upon some distemper of body," and "Of the Vanity of All Worldly Creatures" are probably composed during this period.

1650-mid 56 Death of Thomas Dudley; for Bradstreet, a period of severe sickness and pain, spiritual doubt and depression. Bradstreet gives birth to her last child in 1652, when she is approximately forty years old. "The Flesh and the Spirit" was likely composed during this time, as well as "By night when others soundly slept," "When Sorrowes had begyrt me round," "In my distresses I sought the Lord," and "Worthy art Thou 0 Lord of Praise." Bradstreet also begins her prose journal during this period.

July 1656-May 1657 Another period of serious illness; Bradstreet continues her prose journal. She also composes "What God is like to him I serve," "My soul rejoice thou in thy God," "As Spring the winter doth succeed."

Sept. 1657 Bradstreet's physical suffering is exacerbated by her son's absence. She composes "Upon my son Samuel his going for England," dated Nov. 6, 1657.

Dec. 1657-Jan. 1661 Bradstreet begins a period of health and she seems more optimistic. She composes "In Reference to her Children" in June, 1659.

1661-62 A period of severe depression for Bradstreet. She probably composed "The Flesh and the Spirit" and "Contemplations" at this point, as well as "In my Solitary Houres in my dear husband his Absence." Also, "In thankfull acknowledgement of the letter received from . . . /Simon Bradstreet/," and "In thankful Rembrance for my dear Husbands safe arrival," dated Sept., 3, 1662.

1664 Bradstreet begins her "Meditations divine and morall."

1665 Bradstreet's granddaughter, Elizabeth, dies. The poet writes elegy for Elizabeth Bradstreet.

1666 Fire destroys the Bradstreet home, including many of her manuscripts. "Upon the Burning of her House" is written at this point.

1669 Bradstreet suffers from the deaths of loved ones. Also, this time marks the beginning of her final illness until her death in 1672, at the age of sixty. Numerous elegies on loved ones, and "as Weary Pilgrim now at Rest" (dated August, 1669) composed during this period.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


--- God's Promise to his Plantation. London: John Bellamy, 1630.


---


---


---


---


---


Hildebrande, Anne. "Anne Bradstreet's 'Quaternions' and 'Contemplations.'" Early American Literature, 8, no. 2 (Fall 1973), pp. 117-125.


Irvin, William J. "Allegory and Typology 'Imbrace and Greet': Anne Bradstreet's 'Contemplations.'" Early American Literature, X no. 1 (Spring 1975), pp. 30-46.


Knox, John. The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women. 1558; rpt. London, 1878.


__________. "Revolutionary Rhetorical and Puritanism." Early American Literature, 8, no. 1 (Spring 1978), pp. 45-49.