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Poetic Piety: John Winthrop, Anne Bradstreet, and the Puritan writer's internal errand

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by

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Introduction

When I was first asked to read Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* in high school, I hated it. At this point in my life I did not often use language this strong to describe books I had difficulty with. I fought with Dickens in my elementary school library, I never said that I hated his work, it just wasn't for me in that moment, but I decidedly hated Hawthorne. Over the continuation of my educational career I have found that many people have had similar feelings towards this American romantic writer.

Hawthorne's great-grandfather, John Hathorne, was a judge during the Salem Witch Trials. One of John Hathorne's first trials was the trial of Sarah Good, who was accused of witchcraft. When urged to confess Sarah is said to have replied, "You are a liar. I am no more a witch than you are a wizard, and if you take away my life God will give you blood to drink!" It is said that the Reverend who urged her to confess died choking on his own blood. John Hathorne did not show remorse for his actions in the Salem Witch Trials but his descendants certainly did. You will notice that Nathaniel's last name is spelled differently than John's. It is said that Nathaniel changed his name from Hathorne to Hawthorne to distance himself from his familial history. This history, and the guilt Hawthorne felt, can be seen in his work. Jaffrey Pyncheon, the judge in *The House of the Seven Gables,* died choking on his own blood.

I do not know how truthful this story is, or if there is any way to prove it. What I was more interested in when I came across this small story about Hawthorne was the way it changed my feelings about his work. I saw him as working within a larger moment. It was easy to distance myself from caring about his work when it as existed within a tradition I had deemed dated and irrelevant to me. When I learned about his relationship to the Puritans I began to see his work in a new light, I began to imagine it as reactionary. A reaction requires that something

is still unresolved. I realized there was a lot left unsettled in this literary tradition. I want this project to imagine Puritan literature as equally reactionary, and similarly unresolved. As the American Puritans are writing they are trying to find their own resolve to build a tradition that will last.

Hawthorne used his work to process historical and social trends of shame and excessive Purity; his most famous works show a complicated relationship to faith and the harm it can cause. Literary practices serve as an equally powerful tool of reconciliation for the Puritans. Understanding their literary traditions as unsettled can be valuable. I am seeking to understand them better in order to see their work more completely.

Kathleen Donegan's book *Seasons of Misery* helped me to discover this intent. Donegan's work seeks to display the Puritan's suffering honestly and with nuance. Not because we should pity them, but because we should know them. Her title reveals a lot about the purpose of her work. She seeks to portray the suffering of the Puritans as something unresolved and cyclical. Their misery comes back around, and pieces of their suffering are left unresolved. In this way their misery is seasonal, but "seasons" serves more than one purpose for Donegan. She is also alluding to the use of "seasoned" to describe those who moved to the colonies and became acclimatized. "Seasoning' was a term that originally referred to hardening wood by exposing it to environmental conditions … by the turn of the seventeenth century, 'seasoning' was also used in reference to people who were fortified through exposure to difficult circumstances" (Donegan 7). Donegan goes on to describe "seasoning" as something to pass through, this understanding of "seasoning" is then applied to the process of settlement. In this way Donegan presents settlement as a particularly unsettled stage of colonization, that is necessarily uncertain.

I admire the care that went into crafting Donegan's title, and I want to take some time to explain one of the key pieces of my own title, the Puritan "errand." In Perry Miller's book *Errand Into The Wilderness* the title comes from Reverend Samuel Danforth's sermon that was delivered in 1670. According to Miller, an errand can be two things; a task ordered by a superior, or an action that is aligned with the doer's purpose and intent. The first option is requested and often the person performing the action is not considering its intent. This is in contrast to the second definition of an errand, where the doer is completing a task on their own pretense. Miller's examination of this sermon, and the titles of related sermons, shows the errand of New England to be deeply troubled. "They say, unanimously, that New England was sent on an errand, and that it has failed" (Miller 2). It is also confused, it becomes unclear which kind of errand the Puritan settlement of New England was meant to be and where they fall short of their intent. This explanation of the Puritan errand shows their history as convoluted, and again, unsettled. My title aims to locate this internal disarray in the Puritans' writing practices. The errand they set out to accomplish failed, they were met with misery and a conflicted sense of self. All they could do was turn their questioning inwards.

My first chapter's central focus is John Winthrop's sermon "A Model of Christian Charity." The sermon serves as a model for pious and social interaction. Beginning with an exploration of Winthrop's standing, and critical reception over time, I aim to remind my reader of the uncertainty of the moment. I make use of his model of a Puritan society to discuss the complexities of Puritan ideals, and to provide context for my coming chapters. Winthrop delivers his sermon on a ship without a formal leadership title. During this overseas journey he is both literally and figuratively not on solid ground. Winthrop owes his status to the nature of uncertainly aboard that ship, and it is through his sermon that he seeks to settle himself and those

aboard the ship with him. Winthrop prepares his audience to face difficulty with the language of the gospel. In showing Winthrop's own uncertainty in preparing for settlement, I want to present the Puritan literary tradition as one that is particularly unsettled.

Winthrop's sermon also models the beginnings of the Puritan's rhetorical and literary tradition. I then point to key themes and structural elements of his sermon; such as his discussion of suffering, and use of pairs, which are both themes that reappear in Puritan literature. I use this to position his work as a roadmap for other Puritan writers. I look to problems that are presented to his audience, the ways he chooses to resolve them, and where contradiction is given space to breathe. I also take time to point to the sense of obligation that Winthrop establishes in his piece, and how this impacts the Puritan vision as a whole. The sermon is not only a thematic and rhetorical model, I see this sermon as beginning a tradition where the Puritans understand writing to be a place to work out problems that arise in their faith. I strive to depict the Puritan literary tradition as a reactionary tool for reconciliation.

My second chapter turns to the poetry of Anne Bradstreet. Bradstreet was aboard the *Arbella* with Winthrop as he delivered his sermon. I found her to be a wonderful example of a Puritan poet who expressed conflict and ideological tension often, and with care. Her poems become a prayer, to reconcile the challenges of settlement, with her hopes of a pious life; she reacts to her grief and is critical of the ways she expresses it. Many of her poems center instances of death, illness, and accident. Much like in Winthrop's sermon, suffering is positioned as a key piece of the Puritan experience. Bradstreet's poetry asks the question of how this suffering should be handled, and by the end, she finds her answer in God.

To illustrate this I move through a few of her poems depicting her relationship to suffering. Then I go on to show the ways that her poetry replicates, and expands upon the themes

and structural elements of Winthrop's sermon that I established in the previous chapter. I seek to show how Bradstreet's work encompasses the tools Winthrop's sermon provides, in addition to how she develops them further so that resolution is always found in faith, not reason. The problems she presents still exist, but for her they are resolved when she refocuses herself on the heavens. This chapter aims to show how she is expanding upon Winthrop's method of inquiry; and how her poetry becomes a unique practice of piety, and an exercise of her faith.

In my third and final chapter I move to an investigation of the Puritan practice of composing personal narratives. Diaries, journals, and meditations are all a part of the Puritan practice of religious record keeping. This kind of writing teeters in between the public and private spheres. Its form expresses a problem, where private and public pious lives are distinguished. In order to address this question, I turn to Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's piece, "Vertuous Women Found" which examines ministerial literature about Puritan women. Ulrich's work has been very important in my ability to understand and communicate the tension between private and public piety. Ulrich makes use of Cotton Mathers writing on the topic of women in the Puritan faith. Mather provides three solutions to solve the "problem of women." One: women should be respected for the work they do that is honorable in its own right. Two: women should seek out new work that would make them more respectable. And Three: the problem of social status and equality should be ignored, and their thoughts should be focused on the spiritual realm.

I then turn to the journals and "meditaitions" of Anne Bradstreet to see how she might make use of these solutions, and again, how she has created her own. Bradstreet's approach to the problem, and any other problem she encountered with her faith, is unique. She allows herself space to investigate the problem, and proposes ways it could be resolved; but in the end her

reconciliation of the issue being addressed is always placed in the hands of God. Bradstreet writes her concerns and doubts, but does not hand them over to reason and argumentation. It is her comfort to allow them to remain unresolved. In her work she demonstrates a complex approach to resolving issues within her religion and religious community. In a time of settlement her practice allows for uncertainty.

In this piece I strive to paint a picture of the Puritans that is more uncertain than we might have seen before. Often, they are presented to us in extremes. They have been depicted as courageous, they have been depicted as meek and bold, they have been depicted as cruel and full of shame. What I see them as is unsettled. They are shaken and often riddled with contradiction that they yearn for their God to resolve. This piece aims to showcase the Literature Puritans produced that does not shy away from this uncertainty. In presenting these works I hope to paint a more complex and honest picture of the American Puritans and their literature that might help us consider their impact more carefully.

John Winthrop: Modeling Puritan Inquiry

As the *Arbella* makes its way across the Atlantic ocean in 1630, the people aboard prepare themselves for arrival; and John Winthrop delivers his sermon "A Model of Christian Charity." The *Arbella* was a flag ship, leading several other vessels with it. As the ship traced a path where others should follow, Winthrop's sermon did the same for those journeying with him. His sermon was meant to express a vision, and urge commitment to a cause.

The sermon that Winthrop delilvers aboard the *Arbella* lists ways to live in service of God and unify his people. A key piece of the sermon is the emphasis placed on a unified societal vision; where all acts in a community serve Gods purpose and that purpose is unified among the people. Inequality in the world is shown to be an opportunity for generosity in God's name. Winthrop speaks of "brotherly affection," and emphasizes the value in unity between all Christians. This imagined bond ties them to each other, their destination, and the community they intend to create.

Winthrop's sermon serves as a model, and Winthrop himself has also been presented as a model for Puritan leadership. In Sacvan Bercovitch's book *The Puritan Origins of the American Self* the chapter "Puritanism and the Self" opens with Cotton Mather's ode to Winthrop, "Nehemias Americanus." Bercovitch uses the title of the piece to get at the core of Mather's argument for why Winthrop is an exemplar for an American leader. Winthrop was the the first governor of New England and was described by Mather as "a saint, as a model magistrate, and as the leader of a great empire" (Bercovitch 1). The titles reference to Nehemiah emphasizes Winthrop's status by relating him to a biblical tale of leadership and applying it to an American context. Bercovitch admits that it is not a completely flattering picture of Winthrop, it does not avoid his shortcomings. He is certainly not a saint, but Mather seems to see him as a prime

example of the American Puritan. Winthrop is depicted as someone who might begin to encapsulate the complexities of the Puritan mind and society.

It can be difficult to recall that when this sermon was delivered Winthrop held little to no authority as a religious leader. The Puritan identity that I am so interested in investigating now was not yet established; this sermon provided a unifying vision of the Puritan social ideal. The sermon is now seen as a key piece of our understanding the Puritan social ideal, and how it presents itself rhetorically in the works of the Puritans. It is important to recall the conditions in which this sermon was given. Winthrop was free to preach on the ship because they were still in open waters. His position of leadership relied on their lack of solid ground, literally and figuratively. This uncertainty is reflected in the structure of the sermon.

Winthrop does not delineate clear sections of inquiry in the sermon. There are a lot of different sections that are numerically marked but they are sometimes difficult to follow. Winthrop first lists three reasons why God has created variety in the lived condition of humans; some are rich and some are poor, some are well respected and dignified and some are living in subjection. After the third reason for this disparity, there is a definition of the difference between rich and poor. By Winthrop's definition the rich are those who are able to "live comfortably by their own means duly improved" (Miller 80). Winthrop continues by stating that there are two laws that should be lived by, justice and mercy. After an explanation of justice and mercy as individual actions, Winthrop says there is also a double law, and begins to discuss the next problem of the sermon which is the distinction between the law of nature and the law of grace. He continues on to list three different ways that the law of nature and the law of grace differ from each other. Winthrop then carries on with a list of ways that Christians should be helping each other; these categories of work, are numbered one through four. This list ends with a call to

action which carries Winthrop to the end of the sermon, "thus stands the cause between God and us" (Miller 82). He speaks to the agreement that his audience made with God, and emphasizes how important it is for them to maintain it; for their own physical safety, and for the reputation of their God. All this is to say that the sermons structure is confusing and difficult to follow. There are many times that a problem is established by posing two contrasting ideas; any one of these problems could be followed through to a clear conclusion, instead there are many problems and many solutions. They overlap and intertwine with each other, there is a lot to keep track of and a lot to resolve. I find it to be an accurate depiction of the Puritan mind in this moment, grasping for certainty.

Winthrop's discussion of the covenant, original sin, and the unity that God's work brings, are all key to the creation of a Puritan identity. When met with uncertain terrain and hardships, the Puritan's assertion that they are God's chosen people is very valuable to their survival and sense of self. They need to be able to see their suffering as an act that is in service of God in order to endure it. Winthrop helps create this structure by reframing the purpose and origins of conflict.

In the sermon, Winthrop presents his audience with a problem, a contradiction that arises in life. Broadly, the problem he is presenting could be described as the problem of evil. The core of the problem is this: if God is good, why should we suffer? Winthrop resolves this problem in a few ways; one being that God is good but humans have been bad, the second being that suffering can be valuable in a pious life. He does not deny that there is conflict between their belief in a merciful God and hardship. Winthrop instead repositions suffering's role in piety and shows its purpose to his people.

In this way, Winthrop is shaping a tool for Puritans; a way for them to grieve and process the difficulty of the life that approaches. This tool is meant prepare them for a way of life where religious faith is central, and where hardship and toil must be transferrable to faith and praise. They believe themselves to be creating a new world, in reaction to the old one, one that is also separate from previously established frameworks. In the absence of connection to land or a sense of self this identity is accessible through rhetoric. This sermon serves as a guide for how to bridge the gap between the instruction of the Gospel and life on earth. Through his exposition Winthrop gives new meaning to difficulty and pain; it is now a sign of God's work, it is now the individual's job to find purpose in the challenges they face. Winthrop's audience is tasked with transforming their own suffering into something that serves their faith, and their larger religious community.

The contradictions in ideology that they are asked to resolve are not only felt by those aboard the ship. The goal of a Puritan society can often become muddled in discussions of their piety. Oftentimes of the same contradictions presented in the sermon are held up as examples of incompetence. If the Puritans were truly committed to the idea that they are undeserving; and life should be simple and plain, then would they not take a more traditionally ascetic route? Others might say that the Puritan way of life is too extreme, and should be more forgiving. Perry Miller, whose accounts of Puritan life and piety are critical in this conversation, explains that these conflicts do not have as much weight as we might think. In his book *The New England Mind* he takes the time to iron out many assumptions made about the Puritans, and where those assumptions miss the mark. Miller's writing allows for a nuanced understanding of Puritans, which strives to paint a full picture of their faith and society. This work is important for my

project because it allows us to see the Puritans more completely; it includes their contradictions and uncertainties as a piece of their faith and writing, a piece that should not be shied away from.

Miller explains that many assumptions about the Puritan lifestyle are based on their later modes of conduct; where there is a denunciation of clothing inappropriate to class, accruing wealth, and earthly sensibilities in general (Miller 36). Much of this has diverged from the core of Puritan life which is more "scholastical," as Miller describes it. Puritans do not find life to be tedious and tiresome; their life in the colonies is challenging, physically and otherwise, but their task is to find joy and faith within their suffering.

I want to emphasize Miller's positioning of Puritan religion as an intellectual pursuit, as well as spiritual pursuit for the Puritans. Miller explains in his chapter "The Intellectual Character" that many people assume Puritans to see philosophical thought and academic pursuits to be luxurious and therefore irrelevant, or even offensive, to their piety. "It has been assumed that the Puritan mind was too weighed down by the load of dogma to be worth considering in and for itself" (Miller, 64). This is not the case. Puritan sermons are meticulously crafted arguments, using textual evidence from the Bible at every turn. In order to purposefully distance themselves from frivolity in sermons they carefully reason through their argument. The authors of the sermons present their argument for how scripture should be taken up and acted upon. "Religion is revealed in Scripture, but it is proposed to the mind by the ministry" (Miller, 67). To properly engage with the word of God it needs to be carefully considered and reasoned with.

Winthrop's sermon reasons through what he sees as conflicting in the scripture, he sees breaks in reason and wants to expose these as the shortcomings of man's comprehension, not the scripture. The process of writing and reasoning through this is an act of resolution for Winthrop, and it proposes to his audience a resolution on the issues being addressed. More broadly though,

it also proposes a method for resolution individually. The practice of writing the experience of piety is what allows the Puritans to resolve the contradictions they encounter. Winthrop is providing a path for approaching the challenges Puritans encounter in their faith. He uses the Bible and walks through his argument for a social model with evidence, and references his audience will understand. His logic and reasoning are meant to be replicated privately. The act of resolution bolsters their faith; the transformation of tension and conflict between ideas is an important practice for the Puritans. This practice is often literary and personal, it is a spiritual exercise for them to find faith and blessings in suffering.

Winthrop's sermon is not only meant to serve as a model in action, his style and rhetorical choices are meant to be models as well. There are very distinct styles of sermon that are used and developed over time by Puritan writers. They serve distinct purposes, and are meant to have religious and social implications. The Jeremiad is a good example of this; it seeks to emphasize the importance of reprimand and the threat of eternal damnation. Sacvan Bercovitch's book *The American Jeremiad* seeks to explore this connection between the rhetoric and community, as well as its continued impact on the myth of America. Bercovitch explains the link between this specific type of sermon and its intended impact. "The American Jeremiad was a ritual designed to join social criticism to spiritual renewal, public to private identity, the shifting "signs of the times" to certain traditional metaphors, themes and symbols" (Bercovitch xi).

These distinct types of writing become powerful tools for shaping a society and requesting social and religious change. However, it was important that these tools were not valued too much. "Rhetoric never became an end in itself but was rigorously subordinated to conveying the meaning" (Miller 165). The Puritans were not interested in upholding their writing as feats of literature, they only want it to serve its purpose in conveying God's message. If a Puritan were to

value their work and talent, that would be offensive to God; their work is only a vessel. The rhetoric can and should strive to be effective, but only so that the message is properly understood. The rest of this chapter will work closely with the specifics of the sermon in order to examine the model it creates.

Perry Miller introduces Winthrop's sermon as follows: "For the heart of Puritan piety we must go to Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation,* we find the essence of the Puritan social ideal in Winthrop's exposition. Along with Bradford's narrative, it is the fundamental document for comprehending the Puritan mind" (Miller 78). This distinction between the social and spiritual ideals is important. Miller places emphasis on this distinction because it points to something very important about the Puritan faith; the Puritan faith is unique in that it moves beyond private piety, they are heavily invested in building a society intertwined with their faith. Winthrop is using this sermon to remind his passengers of the agreement that they are entering into, privately to act piously, and publicly, to build a society which will honor God. Faith and piety are the implied center of the social ideal being formed, but Winthrop wants to further define the values of the Puritan society beyond private religious pursuits. Winthrop is not focusing on the specifics piety so much as he is intent on defining how faith should present itself interpersonally and socially.

Winthrop opens with the problem of the disparities between the rich and the poor; from the beginning it is clear that this sermon is exploring the place faith has in social dynamics. Winthrop presents his audience with a problem, and proposes solutions. The sermon serves as a navigation tool in the creation of social identity, and its coexistence with private piety. Winthrop's audience is meant to gain ways of engaging with, and living in, contradiction and difficulty as a part of their faith.

Very quickly in Winthrop's sermon we see that in the Puritan mind suffering is a necessary burden to bear for the graces of God. It is noble to be able to come to terms with pain and witness it in service of God. The wicked are restrained by God, and the poor are uplifted by God. He lists the reasons why God has made this so, the main one being that God is then able to "exercise" his graces through those who are suffering. Their suffering is critical to their purpose, in this way they are able to see suffering as valuable for a larger purpose.

Winthrop continues the sermon by weighing the contrasting points of the law of nature, and the law of grace, showing the ways that they might come into contradiction and how this is meant to be resolved. The biggest difference he establishes between the laws is this: "The law of nature was given to man in the estate of innocency, this of the Gospel in the estate of regeneracy" (Miller, 81). Winthrop reminds audience that humanity created cause for law and rule when we acted against God's will. Toiling and the burdens of life became necessary after Adam broke his promise to God and entered into a life of sin. Faith and the Gospel were not given to us, or were not necessary, until we had given over to temptation. For Puritans, the crux and origin of faith always comes back to a moral battle within the self, one that humans created.

The last example that Winthrop gives of the differences between the law of nature and the gospel is instruction on how to deal with enemies. "The law of nature could give no rules for dealing with enemies, for all are to be considered as friends in the estate of innocency; but the Gospel commands love to an enemy" (Miller 81). Friend and foe become convoluted here, they are no longer in stark opposition. There is a desire to reconcile contradiction to find unity in purpose.

One key piece that signals a desire for unity in social vision and responsibility, is the image Winthrop uses of a shared body. This image is used to link social dynamics to one's

responsibility to their faith. First the body is referred to as the body of Christ. “The end is to improve our lives to do more service to the Lord, the comfort and increase of the body of Christ whereof we are members” (Miller 82). The body of Christ is meant to describe their Christian community; it is meant to describe people committed to the same cause.

This metaphor is used again in Winthrop’s sermon to emphasize the importance of communal and religious improvement being the same cause. “We must delight in each other, make others’ conditions our own, rejoice together, mourn together, labor and suffer together: always having before our eyes our commission and community in the work, our community as members of the same body” (Miller 83). Everything shared and built together is a part of the “commission” which is their agreement with God. Everything they share is in service of God.

There is a large emphasis placed on “the covenant”; which is the religious and social contract that Winthrop sees every person on the ship as entering into. “Thus stands the cause between God and us: we are entered into a covenant with Him for this work; we have taken out a commission, the Lord hath given us leave to draw our own articles” (Miller 82). The work they see themselves as entering into is the creation of a Puritan society, and this society should reflect the law of the Gospel. The purpose of this journey is to serve God in the creation of what they see as a new world.

By the end of the sermon Winthrop makes it clear that if they are to arrive safe and sound, that is to be taken as a shaking of hands, and a binding contract. If God delivers them safely, they are all bound to each other, and to the purpose of the Gospel. This covenant does not have to do with a promise from God to provide, but an agreement on the Puritans end. They are working to maintain the covenant, and fulfill God’s work. By delivering them safely across the

Atlantic God has promised them some sense of security in return for the work they have set out to do.

Winthrop provides two main consequences for the failure to live and act within God's covenant. The first consequences are literal, and physically threatening, the others are rhetorical and theoretical. The impacts of each become intertwined, and it becomes difficult to tell the rhetorical threat from the very real physical threat. The first action that God could take against them is that he will "break out in wrath." This is something that his audience has feared at some point on this journey. "The only way to avoid this shipwreck and to provide for our posterity is to follow the counsel of Micah: to do justly, to love mercy to walk humbly with our God. For this end, we must be knit together in this work as one man" (Miller 83). He speaks of God's wrath that would surely come, and refers to this as a shipwreck that must be avoided. In his allusion to a shipwreck Winthrop evokes a fear that is familiar to the passengers. At this point in time they have been on the ship for some time and surely have encountered the challenges of a life at sea. When imagining what the wrath of God would look like what image could be more apt than the tragedy they fearfully anticipate.

If they arrive at Plymouth, and they do not abide by their agreement, they could be removed from the land once they arrive. "We be consumed out of the good land wither we are going" (Miller 83). In this way, the Puritan presence becomes conditional; if God has not taken action to remove them, they will continue to believe that they are meant to be there. In the closing of the sermon Winthrop asserts this again. "The Lord our God may bless us in the land whiter we go to possess it: but if our heart shall turn away … we shall surely perish out of the good land whither we pass over this vast sea to possess it" (Miller 84). Their ability to remain on

the land is, in their eyes, a sign of God's blessing. Winthrop uses this threat to connect the passengers to the land, as well as to motivate them to uphold the "articles" of the covenant.

The second consequence has to do with the narrative that Winthrop is trying to build. Not only would there be physical repercussions for their disruption of the covenant, but perhaps more devastatingly, people would speak ill of their God. They will be made into an example, Winthrop warns that they "shall be made a story and a by-word through the world: we shall open the mouths of enemies to speak evil of the ways of God" (Miller 83). The fear of becoming a cautionary tale creates a drive for his audience to be in control of their narrative, and to write their own story. This section of the sermon emphasizes the relationship between narrative construction and violent consequences. To speak evil is to enact violence, he carries on to warn them of the curses that people will place upon them, spoken words with lasting consequences.

Fear of bodily harm and eternal suffering is what motivates the rest of the sermon, urging the passengers to create a new world together in service of their God. Suffering together, and fearing the same thing creates unity that Winthrop hopes will thrive. In order to form a cohesive working community that will be prepared to face physically taxing lives, he evokes fear and toil as acts of faith and service to God.

Winthrop's sermon tries to provide resolutions to conflicts he anticipates encountering, all while upholding God as the final judge. He works to connect public social life and private pious life in a way that makes them inseparable. Winthrop wants private piety to be implicated in all aspects of the functioning society he seeks to build. His sermon is a model for how to properly apply private piety to public and societal problems that demand address. The next chapter looks to the poetry of Anne Bradstreet to see where Bradstreet takes up the model that

Winthrop has built in his sermon. In addition to examining where her poems move away from the model, and something new is created.

Anne Bradstreet: Private Practices of Reconciliation

Anne Bradstreet is a Puritan poet who was aboard the *Arbella* with John Winthrop as he delivered his sermon (Hensley xxi). She had recently married Simon Bradstreet at the age of sixteen before sailing across the Atlantic with him and her parents. Several other members of her family also wrote verse in their home in Massachusetts, and her husband was described by Bradstreet as a man who could "inspire a woman to passionate poetry" (Hensley xxiii). Most of the information we have about Bradstreet's history comes from her own writings. Most of which is about adjusting her gaze to the heavens. She writes about illness and grief, joy in her familial life and her marriage, she also writes about the Old World and expresses her doubts about the new one. All of these poems come with a reminder to not distracted by the vanity of life on earth; her writing always humbles her, bringing her closer to God. In addition to her poetry Bradstreet composed "meditations" to guide her children in the ways of piety. Something to note about her work is that she had no intent to publish her poetry; it was published by her brother-in-law and so she did not get a chance to edit.

There are pieces which were shared with her family members more broadly than others, and a few instances when she prepared eulogies. In her more private works shared with her children, Bradstreet has made a point in her writing to be open about her expectations, and difficulties in managing them. She is less open about her concerns about the New World publicly. Upon her arrival she wrote that initially her heart "rose" upon finding a new world with new ways. The colonies were in contrast to her comfortable life in England. She quickly denounces this reluctance to change by reminding herself it is God's will. Much of Bradstreet's poetry allows for contradicting feelings to be expressed, explored, and eventually resolved through her faith.

This chapter will investigate how Bradstreet takes advantage of the methods of inquiry presented to her in Winthrop's sermon to find resolution in her doubts; as well as how she develops her own additional methods of reconciliation in her poetry. In attempting to lead the life that Winthrop is championing Bradstreet encounters contradictions and difficulties. Bradstreet has many poems that depict her struggles with illness. As we saw in Winthrop's sermon, suffering can be valuable when placed in the hands of God. Bradstreet does this in what is considered to be her earliest surviving poem in Cambridge Massachusetts, when she fell ill, and came close to dying. The poem is titled "Upon a Fit of Sickness," and was written in 1632. Bradstreet muses about the possibility of her own death; as the poem goes on she speaks more broadly about the longevity and purpose of a life on earth. Believing herself to be close to death, she is able to process feelings of grief and fear by bringing God's plan to the forefront. She makes room to fear death while also seeing her suffering as important to her faith.

Similarly to Winthrop, Bradstreet sees the imminent threat of death as valuable to consider and voice. Her suffering is positioned as a testament to God, and a reminder of the fragility of life on earth. Much like Winthrop, depictions of bodily fear are meant to motivate action in service of God; the fear of death motivates a way of life. What she does a little bit differently from Winthrop is that she allows more room for contradiction. She shows her reader her doubts and questions. Even though she may feel conflicted, her conclusions always put their faith in God.

Bradstreet opens the poem by asserting that death is one of God's works. She reminds herself, and her reader, that suffering on earth is a part of God's plan and something humanity brought upon themselves. "All men must dye, and so must I / this cannot be revok'd / For Adam's sake, this word God spake / when he so high provok'd" (Bradstreet 222, lines 5-8). Here

Bradstreet alludes to the original sin of Adam, which cast humanity out of the Garden of Eden. It is a reminder of what can happen when you do not live in God's grace and serve him well. The immediate physical suffering which can be experienced while you are alive serves as a reminder, and sometimes a threat, of the reality of eternal damnation.

Bradstreet uses the image of a bubble bursting to describe life on earth. She sees it as short and fragile but also asserts that this bubble is continually breaking. Life, to her, is waiting and witnessing this bursting of a bubble over and over again. The metaphor of the bubble points to a how short lived a life on earth is in comparison to the eternity of the afterlife. However, it also indicates how tiring life is, and the continual striving faith asks of her. Bradstreet displays the bubble as fragile, asking "O bubble blast, how long can'st last?" (Bradstreet 222, line 17). It is impermanent and unreliable. She is sure to emphasize its insignificance and trouble it brings earlier in the poem, "this life's but small," and filled only with "care and strife". It is short and fragile but also seems tedious and repetitive based on the way she describes the suffering involved.

All this is resolved by the graces of her God; if death is God's wish, then she should accept it graciously. "O whil'st I live, this grace me give, / I doing good may be, / Then death's arrest I shall count best, / because it's thy decree" (Bradstreet 222, lines 21-24). She is reminded that death is one of God's works and if she is to die by the word of God, that is something to be grateful for. Her death is God's demand, it is an errand that she is honored to complete in God's name. Even though the poem begins with a tone that laments her grim fate, as it goes on her acceptance of God's will continues to be more explicit.

In the beginning of the poem death is positioned as an ending point that is inescapable. Towards the end of the poem though death begins to open into something more expansive

connecting her to faith and something bigger. Twice she uses the phrase "the race is run," once at the beginning and once at the end of the poem. Both times the allusion to "the race" has a tone of monotony, and struggle. However, the conclusion she comes to afterward shifts the focus drastically. When she says it the first time, there is a finality to death. "The race is run, my thread is spun" (Bradstreet 222, line 3). There is even a sense of grief or defeat when considering the end of her life.

Ultimately this moment of illness and closeness to death makes her more attuned to the purposes of suffering, and refocuses her on the afterlife. The second time we see the phrase "the race is run" the impression given is that the struggle of life on earth was an obstacle to surpass. There is something better beyond the race. "O greats the gain, though got with pain, / comes by profession pure. / The race is run, the field is won, / the victory's mine I see" (Bradstreet 222, lines 27-30). Death becomes an opening by the end of the poem, it offers a new closeness to God. By the end of the poem Bradstreet comes to the realization that she has won a prize unattainable on earth. It is also clear that this closeness necessarily comes with a price. There is pride in the degree of suffering that one can withstand in the name of God. The suffering she goes through allows her to exercise her faith.

Bradstreet is also picking up on the rhetorical moves that Winthrop makes in his sermon and utilizing them for her own purposes. I see her doing this in her use of pairs. Winthrop uses contrasting pairs to depict a problem or a contradiction in his sermon; the poor and the wealthy, the meek and the strong. They are sometimes in contrast with each other, or inverses of each other. Another example of pairs in Winthrop is the figurative shipwreck meant to represent the potential for God's wrath, and the literal threat of a shipwreck. The comparison being made between imminent physical danger and eternal damnation serves as a reminder of the threat of

God's wrath, on earth and in the afterlife. These pairs allow for consideration of the contrasts and intersections between pious imagery and life experience.

Bradstreet uses pairs for a similar purpose in her poem "Upon the Burning of our House," written in 1666. In this poem Bradstreet processes the loss of her home by comparing what remains with the home she imagines God has prepared for her in heaven. This consideration of an alternative home is what allows her to come to terms with the tragedy of losing her family's home. The theme of pairs that Winthrop uses in his sermon is replicated in Bradstreet's poem in order to make room for tension to exist. and also help to resolve it.

Bradstreet explores her grief upon losing her home through her senses. Sight and sound remind her of the memories she had in the home. She laments what she has lost and focuses on the visceral memories of life in the home. Eventually, she turns her eyes upward, refocusing her fondness to pious pursuits, beyond the physical.

In the opening stanza as she is waking up to find her house burning she tells the reader she averts her eyes in sorrow. "For sorrow neer I did not look" (Bradstreet 292, line 6). She describes herself averting her eyes as she looks at the ruins of the house, indicating some unresolved feeling towards it. "My sorrowing eyes aside did cast" (Bradstreet 292, line 26). In this poem she goes back and forth a bit; between recognizing that this is rightfully God's will, and lamenting the loss of her home, as well as reprimanding herself for this lamentation.

Bradstreet describes looking at the ruins and recognizing in the ashes places she would sit, and company that she had entertained there. She reminisces about her favorite things she lost; like a trunk, a chest, and a resting place. She also mourns the familial memories in the house and the loss of the space attached to those memories. "No Candle 'ere shall shine in Thee, / Nor bridegroom's voice ere heard shall bee. / In silence ever shalt thou lye; / Adeiu, Adeiu; All's

vanity" (Bradstreet 293, lines 37-40). Although she admits at the end of these lines that her attachment to what she lost in the fire is self-serving, she is still conflicted by the fondness she feels.

Bradstreet has been lamenting the loss of spaces and things, but right before this she gives attention to the stories that have been lost. "No pleasant tale shall e'er be told, / Nor things recounted done of old" (Bradstreet 293, lines 35-36). Much like Winthrop, Bradstreet recognizes the impact of a story can have. Winthrop warns of the power of a negative word spoken about his people. Bradstreet grieves the loss of positive moments where she could reminisce with her husband.

She remembers the company she shared in the home speaking about hosting parties, and as she describes in the above quotation, sharing the space with her husband. She focuses on the voice of her husband, moving through all these memories with a focus on the senses. The attention given to the visceral memory makes the contrast of a home in the afterlife more impactful; it is a conflicted expression of grief. She finds her attachment to material possession morally troubling, but also, she reminisces about parts of the home that were based in physical experience, and the memories that go beyond that.

As Bradstreet describes her home and the burning of her belongings she shifts the way she talks about them. She places her material belongings in the hands of God. We watch the tone shift as what was once hers is burned and she declares it to be God's.

> And, when I could no longer look,
> I blest his Name that gave and took,
> That layd my good now in the dust:
> Yea so it was, and so 'twas just.
> It was his own: it was not mine;
> Far be it that I should repine (Bradstreet 292, lines 17-22)

As she watches her home burn she makes a point to say that it was God who gave these things to her. For this reason, she asserts that it was "just" for the home to have burned, for it was not hers in the first place. She ends this stanza by saying that she should not feel upset because she knows it is not religiously correct for her to feel so attached to material possessions.

Through her observation of the home Bradstreet is able to come to terms with the tragedy. By the end of the poem it seems that she is more settled. "Raise up thy thoughts above the skye" (Bradstreet 293, line 45). Though she does not speak directly to her gaze, it is implied. She lifts her thoughts, and eyes, to heaven. She is no longer averting her eyes, or woefully scanning the ruins, she concludes the poem fixed on heaven.

In the next stanzas she describes the permanent home that God has prepared for her. Bradstreet comforts herself and finds peace with reminders that God has better plans, metaphorically and literally. She speaks about God as the "mighty architect" of the home that awaits her. What is interesting about this description of the home is that it is still focused on the physical design of the home. "With glory richly furnished, / Stands permanent tho' this bee fled. / It's purchased and paid for too" (Bradstreet 293, lines 49-51). What is the most desirable part of the home it its permanence. Heaven is an escape from the fleeting nature of life on earth and the impermanence of earthly possessions. The home in heaven will replace the one which has burned. These two homes are a pair that contrast each other in their permanence, which helps her to recall her commitment to her faith and rejection of life on earth.

Bradstreet engages more explicitly with the rhetorical construction of pairs in her poem "The Flesh and The Spirit." Bradstreet takes the tension between a pious life and the needs of the body, and abstracts the two components of the problem into characters in dialogue. The spirit and the flesh are sisters who argue with each other and cannot reconcile their differences. The

poem is written in a way that gives the impression that they have been arguing since the beginning of time. The poem recounts a story of struggle between these two sisters; on that is long lasting, and well known.

Bradstreet depicts a back and forth that is personal and internal, and making it a more publicly visible fight between two sisters. A personal battle is turned inside out and exposed to the world, it is biblical in how long lasting this conflict is depicted as. The characters are nothing more than feelings they represent. This is another narrative Puritan audiences can envision themselves as continuing, similar to Winthrop it urges the audience to follow the method of reconciliation the author presents. It allows for faltering, it shows miss steps, and it provides an avenue for reconciliation. Winthrop's sermon places a lot of pressure on the individual, to uphold the covenant with God and act in all ways for him. That pressure when you inevitably falter could become immobilizing. Bradstreet is envisioning a way through this fear, through the difficulties of faith by presenting her doubts dialectically.

Throughout the poem, Bradstreet works in rhyming couplets, giving the poem a distinct rhythm. There are few moments in the poem where the rhyme scheme is broken. I want to consider what feeling these breaks evoke in the poem. They are abrupt and jarring since the rest of the lines are written in a way that leads up to the rhyme. So, when the rhyme falls short, we are left with the feeling that something is missing. Most of the time it feels like you are set up to finish the rhyme, then when you finish the line you find yourself stumbling over its conclusion, doubting yourself. I want to be attentive to these breaks in rhyme, they build confusion and tension in the poem.

The poem depicts a struggle and a tension between two entities, rhyme makes the reader feel the tension within themselves. The breaks are an interruption of certainty, ushering in the

unknown. When I read this poem aloud, I am trusting the rhyme scheme and the rhythm to carry me to the end of a line with ease. I am trusting that even though I cannot know what is next, the structure of the poem prepares me to finish the couplet gracefully. When this rhythm breaks, and I stumble over my words, I continue reading the poem a little less certain. I proceed with more caution, but I still put faith in the rhyme and eventually settle into its rhythm again.

This poem depicts a struggle, one that is difficult and lasting. Bradstreet is expressing an exhaustion with this struggle between body and mind. To keep fighting she holds tight to the promises of heaven, and the faith that it will be everything she has been told and more. Theory, scripture, and prayer are all knocking up against the bodies experience of struggle. The moments where the rhyme scheme breaks reveal a break in certainty in some ways. They point out the difficulty and longevity of this fight and the ways that it wears on the spirit. Faith lives in these breaks, faith is the act of continuing the struggle despite the discrepancy and difficulty. The breaks in rhyme are not a fumbling on the authors part. They are contributing to the expression of contrast and resolution that Bradstreet is committed to making space for.

The first notable instance where there is a break in the pattern is in the opening moments of the poem when the flesh addresses her sister, spirit. “Doth contemplation feed thee, so / Regardlessly to let earth go? / Can speculation satisfy / Notion without reality?” (Bradstreet 215, lines 12-15). Speculation is separated from evidence and experiential fact, to be satiated would be to have that certainty of fact and of experience. The break between “satisfy” and “reality” points to a key piece of the tension that I began to explain above. The tension here lies between the abstract of the spiritual world, and the human reality of having a physical experience. Flesh asks the spirit, are you so satisfied with thought that you don’t need your physical body? This inquiry is then what moves us into the break. The trouble of a Puritan’s existence is that no

matter how much you commit yourself to your faith, and your study of the scripture, and contemplation, you are still met with the troubles of having a life that is vulnerable. Resolving this problem is not possible in this world, and to come to terms with that is the work of faith.

Later in the poem the contrast between theory and action is emphasized. “How oft thy slave hast thou me made / When I believed what thou hast said, / And never had more cause of woe / Than when I did what thou bad’st do” (Bradstreet 216, lines 52-55) What is interesting to me here is that temptation of the flesh is presented verbally. Spirit is not swayed by the riches of the earth, she is tempted by persuasive speech that feels like it is given in a whisper. The shame the spirit feels comes from believing false words. Then the second piece of woe, as it is called, comes from an action. What is most upsetting is only not the misguided belief, but the embodiment of that certainty, the misplaced faith that is put into action.

Through her poetry Bradstreet is able to express the struggle between the Puritan doctrine where toil is valued, and an instinct to grieve her own suffering and sadness. Bradstreet strengthens her faith in the New World and Puritan piety though “versified prayers” (Hensley xxv). The practice of writing creates space for reconciling problems that arise for Bradstreet in her pursuit of faith. Her poetry becomes a prayer, for direct action at times, but also generaly for peace of mind. She asks God to help her resolve the uncertainty she felt during the process of Puritan settlement. In some of her personal writings Bradstreet makes a point to say that her writing is not her own work, but rather, God working through her. As she writes she is provided with resolution. For Anne Bradstreet poetry is a primarily private practice that is closely related to the practice of prayer, in that she offers her doubts and questions up to be resolved by God.

In the next chapter I will look at the Puritan tradition of journals and personal narratives, paying specific attention to the writing of Anne Bradstreet within this category. This form of

writing does a wonderful job of showcasing the innerworkings of the Puritan mind and Puritan piety. It also displays the complex relationship between social order and personal pious practices. With specific regard to the role and "problem" of women in Puritan society these journal entries depict an attempt at reconciliation between private and public expectations of Puritan faith.

Puritan Personal Narratives: "This is my comfort"

Bradstreet's poetry depicts a relationship between herself and God, one that is primarily meant to remain private. She writes about internal conflicts and the ways that she resolves them. The most personal poems act as a prayer, for peace in her piety. She seeks to resolve conflicts and reshape suffering, much like Winthrop set out to do with his sermon. Poetry is distinct from the sermon in that it is more private and personal, it is a practice that she can continue to come back to. For many Puritans, and many members of Bradstreet's family, writing is a powerful tool for resolving issues of faith.

One issue of faith that we don't often see resolved or addressed is the question how the role of women in the church should be understood. Women were not allowed to take on leadership positions in the church. Other Puritan women were exiled for their efforts to engage in conversations about Puritan life and spirituality. Despite this, women were still expected to be very faithful and committed to their spiritual practice. The conflict arises when the question of audience and the public nature of this piety enters the scene. Women should be committed to piety, as we will see in the writing of Cotton Mather, but not so much that they could assume a leadership position.

Historically Bradstreet's writing has been taken less seriously because of her relationship to audience and intention. Though many praised her and admired her work, Cotton Mather for instance, many readers also considered it to be a novelty because of her gender. I found that often instances where Bradstreet is mentioned are in list form; clumped in with other Puritan writers to show evidence of a train of thought in Puritan communities. Bradstreet's work is often only regarded as historically, rather than artistically, relevant; her depictions of home and communal life give evidence of what was happening at the time, but are not regarded as serious

literary works. They are seen as novel poems about a women's life; the novelty is amplified by the fact that she did not intend for them to be published. Though her work is well known and respected, her poems are often deemed unassuming and non-threatening. This is the case for many Puritan women who were writing and thinking about their own piety. As long as their pursuits remained domestically focused, and appropriate, their writing was not a threat.

Many recent critics write about Bradstreet's work apologetically. Forwards to her work often include justification of her writing, asking the reader to remember the conditions it was written under and forgive. In an introduction to an anthology of Bradstreet's work Jeannine Hensley speaks to the way these apologies often undercut her work. "Her work is 'not a piece of literature … only … a curiosity … a pitiful indication of the literary poverty of the days and a land in which it was popular" (Hensley xxxiii). The redeeming quality that is offered up for her work is that it shows the reader historical examples of challenges Puritans faced; as well as an intimate picture of the Puritan home. It is seen as a novel illustration of a long-gone religious era. Rather than what it has the potential to be: a valuable depiction of doubts, a tradition as it is being discovered, and a moment in history still unresolved.

Bradstreet reveals something much larger about Puritan life than its day to day activities. Anne Bradstreet's writing shows how Puritans were using writing and literature as a powerful tool in their spiritual practice. Bradstreet is using poetry to reconcile challenges and conflicts that arise for her as she tries to live a pious life. Puritans see themselves as existing within the biblical narrative as an example of God's works, and the practice of writing down personal narratives is often what cements that assertion in their minds. Bradstreet shows that Puritans are writing without an audience or publication as their motivation.

Although they were not published in Bradstreet's lifetime, her poetry is regularly published along with excerpts from journals she kept for herself and her family. She is participating in a long-standing tradition of record keeping in religious households. This practice is of particular importance for the Puritans. Many Puritan writers and community leaders kept journals that were later printed and serve as valuable indications of time and place. This tradition was not one kept only by leaders or authors; rather, it was common for household journals to be maintained by all family members. This practice is aligned with one of the key pieces of Puritan thought, which places importance on the internal dialogue of the individual. Your sin and your salvation is first and foremost your own to handle. Individual access to critical thought about spirituality and the bible is at the core of Puritan life.

This originates in the Reformation, where the ability to read the bible and come to terms with its stories on your own was something to fight for. The ability to read and understand the Bible on one's own literary and analytical terms is a very important fixture in the Puritan faith. The Bible was made more accessible to people during the reformation with the rise of the printing press. Sermons became more accessible to various community leaders as an effect of the reformation moving authority out of the hands of a select few church officials. They are meant to move the people that hear it forward in their own lives and spiritual studies. The Bible shows the truth but the sermon is needed to bring it to the people.

The Puritan faith centers the experience of the individual. It is very important for Puritans to go through a journey of faith on their own and come to their own conclusions. As Perry Miller so aptly describes, "religion was to be learned only from revelation and from the spirit" (Miller, 65). This experience of revelation was a journey that was meant to be traveled alone. It was also meant to be difficult and taxing for the individual, and the lessons learned could not be taught.

The importance placed on the experience of the individual is emphasized in Thomas Hooker's sermon "Repentant Sinners and Their Ministers." "That which they have found and felt in their own hearts, what they have seen and judged in their own spirits" (Miller 168). It is important that the individual's sin is felt with intensity, that they are "pierced with godly sorrow" in order to fully understand the impact of their sin. This intensity should particularly be felt when one realizes their original sin; sin passed down from Adam to all of humanity. Sorrow for sin was meant to be devastating and could only be experienced along. No one can help you discover it. In Thomas Hooker's sermon "A True Sight of Sin" the discovery of ones own sin is described as analogous to the difference between reading about an overseas journey, and going on the journey yourself. "The one hath surveyed the compass of his whole course, searched the frame of his own heart, and examined the windings and turnings of his own ways" (Miller 154). You cannot just sit and read another person's detailing of their realizations of sin, if you want a written record to rely on the exploration of sin, it should be your own. Journals are a unique depiction of the Puritan faith for this reason. This religious practice is very personal and made to be very public as well in its publication.

Puritan personal narratives have not been ignored as sights of critical analysis. Journal entries have often been a helpful source of historically relevant information. One well-known example of this is William Bradford's *Of Plymouth Plantation,* which is essentially a journal keeping track of the happenings of the New England colonies and settlement in their early days. Bradford describes the intention of this writing as valuable to a longstanding tradition. "That their children may see with what difficulties their fathers wrestled in going through these things in their first beginnings, and how God brought them along notwithstanding all their weaknesses and infirmities" (Bradford 46). By mentioning "weakness and infirmities" to be remembered by

future generations Bradford admits to feeling the difficulty of justifying his own hardship. Writing this narrative allows for the Puritans to imagine their challenges as serving a larger purpose. The value of his work goes beyond a historical record; it gives purpose and religious intent to suffering endured throughout settlement.

Personal narrative practices are a key piece of pious life for the Puritans. Perry Miller describes their purpose as follows: "He needed a strict account of God's dealings with him, so that at any moment, and above all at the moment of death, he could review the long transaction" (Miller 226). Bradstreet has used similar language of Gods "dealings" with her in her own writing. These "transactions" between the Puritan and God have been given a great deal of thought. This was especially true for men who were in leadership positions in the church and the government. Their journals are often used as an exemplar of the innerworkings of the Puritan mind.

Samuel Sewall's diaries are another good example of this tradition. Sewall in particular depicts a piece of the tradition that asks that every moment of a life serves a larger religious purpose. He details the comings and goings of the colony, and everything he takes note of has potential to be a key part of God's dealings with him. It reads more archival than Anne's at times, listing names and daily happenings methodically.

Immediately a simple chore like feeding the chickens serves as a reminder of the necessity of prayer and simplicity for Sewall. Most of his journal entries are like the one cited below, he mentions a moment in his day that reminds him of a lesson or a biblical takeaway, proving to his reader that every moment can become a grappling with sin and grace. Everything can be referentially aligned with the narrative that is already constantly present in his mind, the Biblical narrative, as well as the Puritan expansion upon it in the New England errand.

> Giving my chickens meat, it came to my mind that I gave them nothing save Indian corn and water, and yet they ate it and thrived very well; and that that food was necessary for them, how mean soever: which much affected me, and convinced [me] what need I stood in of spiritual food, and that I should not nauseate daily duties of prayer, etc (Miller 240).

The banal details that Sewall chooses to highlight as a sign or symbol from God seems excessive. What a life that every small chore should remind you of the inadequacy of your faith.

This is the first entry Perry Miller provides from Sewall's diary, it is from 1677. As the entries continue what we see is a picture of Puritan literature that centers instances of suffering. The entries that follow detail the death of Sewall's; child, mother, first and second wives, and his classmate. The reader is told how and when he learned of their passing and is given pieces of the scripture, and preachers, he turned to for comfort. What comes to the forefront of his work is how he understands death as it continues to present itself to him. "I humbly pray that Christ may be graciously present with us all three, both in life and in death, and then we shall safely and comfortably walk through the shady valley that leads to glory" (Miller 256). When read carefully it is a beautiful expression of grief, and Sewall's efforts to process loss. In the end all he can do is hope that the journey is easy.

Miller describes Sewall's dairy as a valuable depiction of one man's transition from the seventeenth into the eighteenth century. Often it is most valued for its contribution to the representation of this historical shift in the colonies. These journals are distinct from Anne Bradstreet's journals as well as the journals of other Puritan women. The journals of Puritan women are often regarded as ahistorical, they are interesting but are not seen as influential for the form of writing, or valuable for archival purposes. In the introduction of *The imaginary puritan: literature, intellectual labor, and the origins of personal life* Leonard Tennenhouse and Nancy Armstrong pay particular attention to this common theme. "We have connected gender to the fate of writing. It is what might be called feminine writing that declared itself by nature

detached from politics and history so that it might change the status, behavior, and political objectives of writing" (Armstrong 24). In this introduction they go on to describe the ways that this changes the relationship to the author as an individual and the broader intentions of writing. The personal narratives of Puritan women give particular attention to the role of writing and thinking about piety privately.

They differ first in subject matter; women's journals often focusing on themes like familial faith, duty, and the salvation of their children. Special attention is also paid to births and deaths in the family in their recording of happenings of the household. The journals also differ in terms of intention. There is no expectation of a public audience or their writings bearing on their potential for social status. Puritan men who are in leadership positions were likely operating under the assumption that their journals would be read, and deemed valuable, after their death.

Besides this difference in content and audience, there is also a difference in routine and practice. Puritan wives are expected to manage the home and other "earthly" duties in order for their husbands to focus themselves completely on their pursuit of piety. Increase Mather describes the difficulty this caused his father when his mother died, "She being a Woman of singular Prudence for the Management of Affairs, had taken off from her Husband all Secular Cares, so that he wholly devoted himself to his Study, and to Sacred Imployments" (Ulrich 26). For this reason, the journals of Puritan wives take on a different role, they are often a more complex engagement with the home life of Puritans. They display the contrast between the public and private expectations of piety.

In her essay "Vertuous Women Found" Laurel Thatcher Ulrich gives attention to Puritan ministerial literature about women and their roles in the church. She gives focus to Cotton Mather's writing on this topic, and dissects it carefully. Before this though she opens with a clear

list of what was expected of Puritan women. Ulrich begins each paragraph with a statement of what virtuous women did and did not do, followed by evidence for the claim. A virtuous woman sought God early, a virtuous woman prayed and fasted, a virtuous woman loved to go to church, a virtuous woman read, a virtuous woman conversed, a virtuous woman wrote, a virtuous woman managed well, a virtuous woman submitted to the will of God. Puritan women are expected to engage in spiritual pursuits with rigor and unflinching commitment, all while managing a home. They are expected to have the same responsibility and commitment to the scripture, church, and personal considerations of it as any man of God. The last virtue listed, submission, tells us about the contradiction that arises in the lives of Puritan women. They are meant to be intensely pious in all the ways listed, but this commitment must exist privately.

Submitting to the will of God means accepting hardships of birth, the death of children, or personal illness, with grace. Many of the challenges we see Anne Bradstreet writing about and coming to terms with fall within this category of submission. Submission to God does not just mean submission to God's will; it also means submitting to husbands and fathers as spiritual and social leaders. In this way, the public social sphere begins to encroach upon the private practices of piety.

Ulrich turns to the writing of Cotton Mather to depict this tension, one which she describes as the tension, "between presumed private worth and public position" (Ulrich 40). Mather tries to resolve this conflict three ways according to Ulrich. Mather encourages women to "enlarge" activities that will bring them recognition socially. He also pushes for recognition of the activities that women are already doing that deserve praise. The last way he tries to resolve the problem is to "deny the importance of status altogether, and turn his attention to the spiritual realm" (Ulrich 36).

As was discussed in the previous chapter, Anne Bradstreet's writing often deals with reconciliation of religious conflicts. Though she is not addressing the "problem" of women as directly as the works Ulrich presents, Bradstreet writes about her struggle to submit in instances of death, birth, and tragedy. I want to now look at how Anne Bradstreet's journals, letters, and meditations might make use of the three paths of resolution Mather presents for the pious life of a Puritan woman. Does she ever address this tension directly? How does she reason her way through it, and how is this tension resolved for her if it is resolved at all?

Anne Bradstreet's piece "To My Dear Children" reads like a letter more than poetry or prose. She makes it clear that this is meant to be read after she has passed. Based on the opening paragraph, the drive to write this comes from a desire for her beliefs, and lessons to her children, to be more lasting on earth. She expresses concerns that she will not get to speak to all of her children before her death, and if not all, perhaps not in the manner she would like. So she begins the task of recording her thoughts to lend her children a "spiritual advantage by [her] experience" (Bradstreet 240).

With this opening paragraph setting the intention for the work we can see that Bradstreet envisions her writing as capable of passing along her faith and the lessons she has learned. This is not based in ego, she sees herself as a vessel for God to speak through. "I have not studied in this you read to show my skill, but to declare the truth, not to set forth myself, but the glory of God" (Bradstreet 240). This is not an uncommon assertion to make in the Puritan faith. Any technical skill or stylistic practice she has picked up is not to serve her own purposes as an author, but to more accurately tell the truth of her faith and her relationship to God. She also uses this to speak humbly about her writing, describing it as "very weakly and imperfectly done"

(Bradstreet 245). She explains to her children that if she had set out to write under different pretenses, it might have been more pleasing to read, but that is not her focus.

Bradstreet's letter to her children is very concise, each paragraph details a distinct period in her life, usually marked by a shift in her relationship to God. At six or seven she begins to understand sin, and makes an effort to avoid it; she becomes ill and find this to be an opportunity to commune with God. At 14 or 15 she is "sitting loose from God," until she is again ill and this illness restores her relationship to faith. She describes her marriage and journey to the colonies, being sure to include that she never strayed too far from God; as he often would humble her with an affliction to "take her home." She is sure to emphasize that any suffering that God gave her only made her more committed to her faith. Impacting her reader so that they can also allow their suffering to bring them closer to God.

Bradstreet admits to her children the doubts that have befallen her in her journey with faith. She describes the various places where she has argued with herself; about the distinction between Puritan and Catholic faith, the truth behind scripture and its origins, whether or not there is a God. All this is resolved through God and his word. Bradstreet makes ample space to detail to her children her doubts, indicating that admitting to doubts and striving to resolve them is crucial to her faith.

She admits to questioning how much truth there can be to the scripture. "I never saw any miracles to confirm me, and those which I read of, how did I know but they were feigned?" (Bradstreet 243). This is a large doubt to admit to her children, she even admits that at times she had been unsure if there was a God at all. Privately expressed, these doubts allow for a more powerful kind of faith. She describes the arguments she had with herself as she tries to prove her doubts wrong, and finding only more questions and weaknesses. Abruptly she comes to a

resolution "That there is a God, I see. If ever this God hath revealed himself, it must be in His word, and this must be it or none … no human invention can work upon the soul" (Bradstreet 244). Her doubts are reconciled by the fact of her faith, she cannot reasonably argue her way through but she reminds herself that this is not her place.

Bradstreet does this again in her piece "Meditations When My Soul Hath Been Refreshed With The Consolations Which The World Knows Not," a lengthy title which explains how her doubts are put at ease. The renewal of her faith cannot be found through argumentation and reasoning. She reconciles her doubts with thoughts of heaven and her God. Though she works to consider her doubts carefully, and takes the time to examine them, she finds peace in knowing they will be resolved in heaven. "But this is my comfort, when I come to Heaven, I shall understand perfectly what He hath done for me, and then shall I be able to praise Him as I ought" (Bradstreet 250). Bradstreet allows conflict to exist, with the knowledge that the problem is not hers to resolve. Puritans should try to resolve their doubts so that they do not "tempt" God to resolve them, but ultimately, they must know, that it is not their problem to resolve.

This is what sets Anne Bradstreet's writing apart from the other works that this project has examined. Earlier in this chapter I said that I wanted to examine which strategies from Cotton Mather's writing that Bradstreet makes use of in his writing about women. Encouraging women to recognize the value in the work they do, encouraging them to take on new kinds of work that are more respectable, and finally to give the problem over to God. Though Bradstreet may venture into his other modes of reconciliation, she consistently returns to the third solution Mather presents. It is a solution that does not come from reasoning in the end, only her faith.

Conclusion

This project has used the distinct literary forms of the sermon, poems, and personal narratives to seek out the ways that Puritan writers address and resolve questions that arise for them in their faith, and their society. Each form has sought to display a different relationship to public and private expressions of doubt. The implications of a sermon are very different from the implications of a private poem, or family journal. Though the forms vary, each one serves to express the confusion, chaos, and misery that settlers created for themselves. My hope with this project is that the reader will be able to examine more closely traditions they take for granted or accept as settled.

Throughout this project my advisor and I continued to return to a set of questions when examining a text. We asked what is it that this text "is, does, and is good for." This set of questions comes from a book by Richard Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters,* wherein he poses a series questions to the reader in his introduction. "Writing orients itself in or against some understanding of what writing is, does, and is good for that is culturally composed and derived" (Brodhead 8). This set of questions is meant to place the work within a cultural and historical context. Overtime the central focus of this project has become my investigation of how Puritan literature seeks to ask questions of itself.

In Perry Miller's introduction to *Errand Into the Wilderness* he explains why this process of internal questioning occurs. "Thereupon, these citizens found that they had no other place to search but within themselves–even though, at first sight, that repository appeared to be nothing but a sink of iniquity. Their errand having failed in the first sense of the term, they were left with the second, and required to fill it with meaning by themselves and out of themselves" (Miller

15). This project aimed to show that literature was a key piece of the Puritan's effort to create meaning.

There are still questions left unanswered in the Puritan literary tradition. Kathleen Donegan's chapter on Plymouth is titled "Scarce Able to Bury Their Dead," and it focuses on anxieties around burial and death for the Puritans. The title references William Bradford's writing from *Of Plymouth Plantation* where he writes, "the living were scarce able to bury the dead" (Bradford 95). Bradford presents this as part of God's plan, but Donegan wants to display the presence of death as something still unresolved for the Puritans. Donegan asks her reader to consider what the dead demand of the living, and what is left unsettled. "The dead in and around Plymouth need to be buried twice: once in fact and then in history" (Donegan 118). Similarly, the questions the Puritan author asks of themselves and of their audience are still unsettled.

In literature writers continue to react to the Puritan religious and literary traditions. I want to return to the writing of Nathaniel Hawthorne; a writer who is largely ignored by modern audiences, but whose questions are still left unanswered. One of Hawthorne's short stories titled "Roger Malvin's Burial," focuses on anxieties around the task of a proper burial. Roger Malvin and Reuben Bourne were in battle together; Roger lies dying and the men come to an agreement before Roger passes. When Reuben is healed, he will return to Roger's bones and give him a properly marked grave. Reuben does not fulfill his commitment, and lies to Roger's daughter, Dorcas, who he later marries. He is riddled with guilt when he considers the unfinished errand. His guilt does not leave him until many years later when he is hunting in the forest with his son, and he shoots at a deer. Dorcas and Reuben approach what they assume to be the wounded animal, only to find their son, dead, on the markings of Roger Malvin's grave. Much like Donegan, Hawthorne is asking how those who came before us can be properly laid to rest. The

tragic turn of events that Hawthorne depicts in this ending makes his reader long for resolution.

Resolution of guilt, resolution of family history, and resolution for the errand left unfinished.

> He trusted that it was Heaven's intent to afford him an opportunity of expiating his sin; he hoped that he might find the bones so long unburied; and that, having laid the earth over them, peace would throw its sunlight into the sepulchre of his heart.
> (Hawthorne 33)

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