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FEMINIST INVISIBILITY: THE EXAMPLES OF ANNE BRADSTREET AND ANNE HUTCHINSON

Elisa New

In a critical age that leaves few verities untouched, scholars of colonial American literature are nevertheless likely still to agree that the least of Anne Hutchinson's ambitions was to be remembered as a Visible Saint. For Hutchinson, the rapid vitiating of Puritan integrity in the New World and the audible rumblings of communal disquietude to be heard there were directly traceable to a mistaken reliance on outward signs. A cultural oligarchy that rested on outward sanctification at the expense of inward, or invisible, justification was trading Christ's power for its own, and thereby making the fledgling Puritan experiment a sham. But Hutchinson's objection to the cohering ethos of visibility is of more than theological interest. The critique she offered of representativeness as a male excrescence on essential Christianity should inform our understanding of Hutchinson's feminism as well. In the course of defending her private ministrations to women by calling into question the legitimacy of an institutionalized ministry supervised by Visible Saints, Hutchinson adumbrated a feminism whose good faith inheres in its eschewal of visibility. Moreover, if Hutchinson codified inwardness as a tenet of colonial feminism, she was not alone in doing so. Anne Bradstreet's well-documented dismay at her brother-in-law's unauthorized publication of her poems under the title *The Tenth Muse, Lately Sprung Up in America* is another salient instance. More than false modesty, Bradstreet's demurral of personal fame (like her suspicion, chronicled in poem after poem, of meretricious prominence) is best understood as a recoil from visibility cognate with Hutchinson's, though a recoil that contemporary feminist criticism is not likely to detect. Our emphasis on making audible the silenced, and lending outline to the erased, is disadvantaged when it comes to the study of colonial women and their concerns. What historical respect for the lives and words of Bradstreet and Hutchinson must exact is new understanding of a colonial feminism that shunned militancy and embraced ministry—that, in fact, reserved its gravest suspicions for what we call "politics." Both Hutchinson and Bradstreet, properly understood, evacuate the sanctuary of late twentieth-century feminist legitimacy: enfranchisement.

Given the prestige currently accorded all manner of textual mixed messages, one

is not surprised that the work of Anne Bradstreet—whose own duplicities were first suggested in the 1960's and 1970's by Adrienne Rich and Ann Stanford—has proven irresistible to critics seeking to match the inception of a subversive and explicitly political female poetics with the inception of the nation.¹ To be sure, as a poet writing in a world suspicious of any self-expression, much less female self-expression, and in a culture governed by a body of male elders, Bradstreet was well apprised of the limitations of female speech. Indeed, as is often noted, Bradstreet was an impressionable twenty-five years old when Anne Hutchinson, who had attended her own St. Botolph's Church in Boston, England, was brought before the General Court. With her father, Thomas Dudley, as one of Hutchinson's ungentle interrogators, and her husband, Simon, in attendance, Bradstreet had ample opportunity to learn that her culture's power of censure was partly a power to censor, and that a woman's words held political threat.²

Between them, Bradstreet and Hutchinson magnetized all the fame there was for women in that first generation of the colony, Bradstreet acting the very model of womanly patience Hutchinson refused. Neither should we wonder, then, that critics would look to Hutchinson for the key to Bradstreet's subversion, finding beneath Bradstreet's blandishments to male patronage a vision of female autonomy as decisive as Hutchinson's is assumed to be. Arguing from that place in the *Meditations* where Bradstreet confesses that "[her] heart rose" before she "submitted" to the "way of

¹All quoted passages from Bradstreet writings are taken from *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*, ed. Jeannine Hensley, foreword by Adrienne Rich (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1967). Between Rich's foreword in 1967 and her postscript to that foreword, added in 1979, we may trace the development of the current feminist emphasis on the particularity of women's writing. In 1967, Rich was content to maintain, "To have written poems, the first good poems in America, while rearing eight children, lying frequently sick, keeping house at the edge of the wilderness, was to have managed a poet's range and extension within confines as severe as any American poet has confronted" (xx). The key words here are, of course, "good" and "any American poet." Bradstreet, Rich tries not to apologize, is as good a poet as any poet, man or woman, might have been in her circumstances. By 1979, Rich's terms have changed. Questions about the quality of Bradstreet's work are now absorbed into a query as to "what strategies women poets have resorted to in order to handle dangerous and denigrated themes and experience." Bradstreet's "good" poems are, in fact, better for only being good. While this shift of emphasis from the poem to the poet, from the verbal matrix to the voice that finally breaks silence, has the salutary effect of focusing our attention on the expressive obstacles faced by the woman poet, it also poses the no longer theoretical danger of preempting recognition of woman-authored poems that are beyond good. The emphasis on rupture and dissent, now institutionalized, has led to a criticism that ritually celebrates female discontents and the linguistic fracturing such discontent yields, while reserving in romantic abeyance a holism women will only enjoy in a post-patriarchal age. Good poems written under patriarchy, or even representations of satisfactory female experience—marital happiness, worldly power, pleasure in nature—are guilty of collaboration, or at least false consciousness, unless proven otherwise. Bradstreet's marriage poems, technically among her best, are thus treated uneasily in recent critical work. For an extreme example, see Ivy Schweitzer, "Anne Bradstreet Wrestles with the Renaissance," *Early American Literature* 23 (1988): 291–312. Ann Stanford takes a more sensible position in *Anne Bradstreet, the Worldly Puritan* (New York: Bart Franklin, 1975).

²See Francis J. Bremer's collection of essays on Anne Hutchinson, *Troubler of the Puritan Zion* (Huntington, N.Y.: Robert E. Krieger, 1981). Among essays in that collection, Lyle Koehler's "The Case of the American Jezebels: Anne Hutchinson and Female Agitation during the Years of Antinomian Turmoil, 1636–1640," is especially illuminating on the attractions of antinomianism to women subject to the corporate disenfranchisement that is spelled out in the Pauline letters. See (also in Bremer) Ben Barker Benfield's "Anne Hutchinson and the Puritan Attitude Toward Women."

God," recent critics have built on the observations of Stanford and Rich to suggest that Bradstreet's pieties only half conceal an explicitly political vision of a gentler female culture, not only antinomian and utopian, but matriarchal and "gynocentric." Such a view treats Bradstreet's poems as testing grounds, little Rhode Islands of tolerance, as it were, for the idea of female polity.

Evidence is not wholly wanting for such a view. As early as "The Prologue," for example, Bradstreet risks the sacrilege of Hellenism to invoke such a safe haven when she pauses a moment longer than is necessary to allow that the "antique Greeks were far more mild / Else of our sex, why feigned they those nine / And poesy made Calliope's own child" (33–35). Not only do the lines betray a hankering for the respect Greeks accorded both women and poets, they intimate as well certain affinities between generative and poetic power. Although this ideal is vanished by the next line where the Christian Bradstreet dutifully smashes the idols—"The Greeks did nought, but play the fools and lie" (38)—the paradise of Muses lingers pleasantly in the mind. Similarly suggestive is Bradstreet's much-interpreted elegy for Elizabeth. There, Elizabeth's temperate authority may be seen to establish a paradigm for a specifically female and implicitly superior style of governance. And along these same lines, in "A Dialogue between Old England and New," mother and daughter may be seen to play rueful witnesses to a male mismanagement finally bottoming out in butchery.

Yet the Hutchinsonian model, which designates Bradstreet poetic mother of a feminist pantheon of subversives, is out of focus or, at least, incomplete. Whatever her ultimate effect, and however her questioners saw her, Hutchinson's mandate was not in itself to threaten, topple, or replace the outward forms of patriarchy. True, as midwife she had been privy to the spiritual confessions of women, and as bedside confidences became public gatherings, Hutchinson's power came to be seen as an ineluctable threat to the young and shaky Puritan order. But, as Kai Erikson has shown so persuasively, what Hutchinson precisely failed to appreciate was that "Sainthood in New England had become a political responsibility as well as a spiritual condition."³ As literal-minded a Puritan as might be imagined, Hutchinson sued not for a new law—her "antinomianism" sacrifices the option of simple legislative reform—but for Christ's inner power. At the heart of (and authorizing) her resistance to her accusers was the oft-repeated conviction that the true ministry of Christ would oppose not only the institutionalization of Calvinism as a politics and a pecking order, but oppose as well any outward organization as antithetical to the workings of spirit.⁴

³Kai T. Erikson, *Wayward Puritans: A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York: John Wiley, 1966), 87.

⁴This recoil from intermediaries, ritual or political, follows on an experience of radical disalignment between the believer and outward forms, and it is the key experience—the ur-experience—of Reformation theology. As Larzer Ziff's and Everett Emerson's studies of John Cotton (*The Career of John Cotton*:

Such self-conscious, even cultivated unworldliness is, of course, the hallmark of Reformation theology, even as it is that theology's paradoxical impediment. Antinomianism is the pejorative term for the most normative of Protestant impulses: antinomianism is Protestant theory literalized and made praxis. As scholars from Pelikan to Ahlstrom to Erikson have shown, the chief dilemma that heirs to the Protestant Reformation faced was that the resistance to overstructuration and outward forms that precipitated Luther's revolt was, in Erikson's words, "hardly the kind of doctrine a government could afford to tolerate . . . once that government came to power" (84). By Hutchinson's day, it was already a truism that Reformed theology, even as it freed the individual soul from the corrupt mediation of the parish priest, nevertheless bound that soul in a relation with a larger body: a congregation. Supervised by representatives—Visible Saints, presumably prepared by grace to enforce the covenant on which all depended—this congregation was in every sense of the word a polity. The model of "Christian charity" Winthrop had sketched out on the *Arbella* was also a political model, stratifying not only power but also access to the Power of Powers, to that same God Luther's revolution had made accessible.

Hutchinson's thought dismisses all such accommodation of spirit to ecclesiastical requirement. She recuperates a Protestantism so theoretic, so literally pure, that the politicization of any ministry into a representative form of spiritual government is anathema. For Hutchinson, grace cannot be secured by proxy. Thus, when she protests to her interrogators, ". . . But give me Christ; I seek not for graces but for Christ; I seek not for promises but for Christ; I seek not for sanctification but for Christ," we misplace emphasis when we hear the trumpet tones of militancy. The tenor of her cry is all plangent yearning: not "give me liberty or give me death," but "How long, Lord, how long?" To infer a worldly politics, and beyond this a revolutionary program, from Hutchinson's stalwart defense of the female gatherings she held in her home simply misses the point. First, it attributes to Hutchinson a confidence in "carriage" she made it her business as unwilling public figure to denounce. But beyond this, what the focus on Hutchinson's alleged militancy obscures is what I have already called her ministry: a species of pastoral care for a constituency languishing, famished and discontented. Beatifying, in other words, the

Puritanism and the American Experience [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962]; *John Cotton* [New York: Twayne Publishers, 1965], respectively) make clear, in Hutchinson's New England it was Cotton who set the tone, warning against reliance on sanctification, or outward signs, at the expense of justification. Though Cotton came to view Hutchinson's reading of his preaching the Covenant of Grace as having gone too far, Cotton's hewing to the spirit was readily confused with antinomianism. Sydney E. Ahlstrom, in his *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), describes how Martin Luther's ministry, and by extension Protestantism itself, found its inception in Luther's simple dismay at a species of Roman Catholic ritual gone oligarchic: "When Martin Luther celebrated Mass in Rome during his visit there in 1510, he was appalled that the Italian priest at the adjacent altar had said his last amen before Luther had gone farther in the order of service than reading the gospel lesson. At San Sebastiano he saw seven masses completed in an hour; and he encountered priests who did not know how to hear confession" (72–73). This temporal disjunction has its analogue in the spatial disjunction felt by Hutchinson's female constituents, stranded in the meetinghouse peanut galleries.

person of Hutchinson, we stand to miss the spiritual conditions of those New England women whose advocate Hutchinson became.

For whatever the causes—homesickness, unhealthful food, unceasing work, patriarchal inflexibility, or some combination of all these—a conspicuous symptom of this female malaise in the colony was strife internal to the community of women.⁵ The decided fractiousness of the male community, nowhere illustrated so well as in that restive divisiveness on matters of doctrine that precipitated the Antinomian Controversy, no doubt contributed to an atmosphere where women pitted themselves against other women. This friction among women surfaces in the earliest accounts of the colony. Historians of the Antinomian Controversy inevitably cite Clapp, whose contemporary account of the early 1630's describes a "woman of Boston who . . . one day took her little child and threw it into a well, and then came into the house and said, now she was sure she would be damned, for she had drowned her child" (Bremer, 24). The episode, customarily adduced for what it says about the extreme spiritual incertitude of the colonists, should also set off in our minds a first, muted alarm about the specific ills of the community of women. In her documents from the social history of American women, Nancy Cott includes, amid testimonies and indictments of women censured for various sexual infractions, the case of "Sara Scott presented for Reviling & striking her Mother . . . For undutifull abusive & reviling speeches & carriages to her naturall mother."⁶ And, as recent social histories have made abundantly clear, neighborliness was a virtue sorely tested on meetinghouse benches, which were made to accommodate more bodies than benches ought.

For many of us, the most immediate source for knowledge about breakdown in the community of Bay Colony women is Hawthorne, who (for reasons surely deeper than his ambivalence about Margaret Fuller) sets up interference to Hester's development as antinomian heroine. Overdetermining Hester's ignominy from the outset, Hawthorne effectively preempts readings that would simply oppose Hester's maternal vitality against the dour legalism of the phalanxed elders. The hardly idealized portrait of Hester's tense relationship with the intractable Pearl, the troubling cameo of the Puritan "gossips" turning on Hester in the first pages of *The Scarlet Letter*, and

⁵See Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's groundbreaking social history of women in Puritan New England, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750* (New York: Knopf, 1982), and Lyle Koehler's *A Search for Power: The Weaker Sex in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Urbana, Chicago: Illinois University Press, 1987). Ulrich, in a chapter ironically titled "Good Neighbors," and Koehler, in his chapter "From Self-Punishment to Manipulation," document a female malaise so close to the surface of colonial life as to raise questions about the gynocentric option seeming anything close to utopian. For more general introductions to colonial family life, see Edward Morgan's classic *The Puritan Family: Religious and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth Century New England* (New York: Harper and Row, 1966); Roger Thompson's *Women in Stuart England and America* (London: Routledge, 1974); and especially John Demos' *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth County* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970). Demos' work is especially illuminating on the way in which the colonial family functioned as a civic rather than a private unit.

⁶Nancy Cott, ed., *Root of Bitterness: Documents of the Social History of American Women* (New York: Dutton, 1972), 60.

the portrait of the mature Hester acting Hutchinsonian counselor to women in crisis—taken together, these suggest an intracommunal set of tensions not wholly ascribable to the maldistribution of power between men and women.⁷ A whole history of literary and nonliterary texts attests to reasons, other than the flowering of revolutionary female consciousness, why overcrowded meetinghouse benches of the early settlement would have been emptied of women who instead filled Hutchinson's parlor and spilled out her door.

The first text Hutchinson cited in her trial at the Church of Boston crystallizes these reasons, though that text, the Pauline Epistle to Titus, served at least three functions for Hutchinson: first, placating her interlocutors; second, authorizing her role; and, finally, describing in almost monographic detail the suffering state of her constituency. For purposes of mollifying her accusers, Hutchinson could not have picked a more conciliatory chapter. Titus reads like a scriptural Handmaid's Tale, a patriarchal chapbook for managing female unruliness through a system of female quislings. In the admonishing tone characteristic of the epistles, the Pauline writer (who may or may not have been Paul) instructs: "Bid the older women . . . to be reverent in behavior, not to be slanderers or slave to drink; they are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be sensible, chaste, domestic, kind, and submissive to their husbands, that the word of God not be discredited." Note that while the surface authoritarianism of Titus makes it the ideal text by which Hutchinson might soothe her authoritarian judges, its unambiguous countenancing of female gathering also makes it an unanswerable prooftext for her own legitimacy.

These observations, however, should not obscure the special role and function of Titus among the Pauline epistles.⁸ Companion piece to Timothy (a text that

⁷Michael Colacurcio—in his "In the Footsteps of Anne Hutchinson" (Bremer)—meticulously traces out the ways in which *The Scarlet Letter* may reflect on the Antinomian Controversy. Colacurcio is especially enlightening on the issues surrounding Visible Sainthood. See also Colacurcio's more recent "'The Woman's Own Choice': Sex, Metaphor and the Puritan 'Sources' of the Scarlet Letter," in *New Essays on The Scarlet Letter* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). This essay shows how Governor Bellingham's own questionable marriage to a girl many years his junior underlies the problematics of Visible Sainthood that *The Scarlet Letter* explores.

⁸Citing the Pauline Letters to Timothy and Letter to Titus, Hutchinson could not have picked texts better calculated to ensnare her interpreters in their own logic. A chief impetus to the Epistle to Titus was the "false teaching" that threatened the shaky establishment of early Christianity. Scholars debate over whether the false teaching to which the text refers is that of Jews or Gnostics. See Anthony Tyrrell Hanson, *The Pastoral Letters: Commentary on the First and Second Letters to Timothy and the Letter to Titus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), 16. In our connection it is enough to note, first, that Hutchinson opens her theological debate with a text suggesting the dire preexisting instability of the spiritual community that her accusers upbraid her for upsetting; but second, that she felt sure enough of her scriptural authority to invoke texts absorbed in "false teaching" and "heresy," without worrying unduly that the false teaching or heresy was her own. See David Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy 1636–1638: A Documentary History* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1977), 314. More generally, though, Hutchinson's reliance on Titus and Timothy should alert us to her absorption in texts that Aquinas called "pastoral textbooks." The idiom of Titus, like that of Timothy, is less utopian—even less theological—than it is ruthlessly practical, occupied with giving ministers criteria for keeping spiritual order in a base world run by pretenders. Indeed, it seems distinctly possible that invoking these Pauline epistles to

Hutchinson also cites in the course of her trial), Titus has since Aquinas' time been known as a "pastoral letter," addressed less to ministers as theologians than as management. Hutchinson's Titus is the well-thumbed text of the pastor beset by social ills, a book whose scant three chapters anatomize all the maladies spiritual bodies are heir to—quarrelling and gossip, ill will and self-hatred, slander, incivility, competition, and despair. Using this text to defend her instruction of younger women, Hutchinson implicitly acknowledges conditions in her subculture whose recognition should have defrayed any misgivings the elders might have had of a female coup d'état and, in our time, should preempt any romantic reconstruction of her utopian platform. The citation of Titus suggests an internally driven female unhappiness no doubt exacerbated by, but not wholly attributable to, male domination. The demoralization her text implies left her community too internally wracked to run a revolution. And if I stress "implies" here, it is because both the documents of the Controversy and the history of that Controversy leave so much to inference, raising up Hutchinson in bas relief while letting sink out of sight the women whose dire spiritual conditions her ministry, while it lasted, eased.⁹

Bradstreet's poems excavate just these conditions, revealing the generalized female discontent that was receptive to Hutchinson's ministry. This is why the remodeling

ministers beset, Hutchinson cast herself in the role of the Pauline correspondent, with her interrogators accordingly consigned to the sinful congregation of men who, as Timothy recounts, "will love nothing but money and self; they will be arrogant, boastful and abusive; with no respect for parents, no gratitude, no piety, no natural affection; they will be implacable in their hatreds, scandal-mongers, intemperate and fierce, strangers to all goodness, traitors, adventurers, swollen with self-importance. They will be men who put pleasure in the place of God, men who preserve the outward form of religion, but are a standing denial of its reality," [who get] "themselves into private houses and there get miserable women into their clutches, women burdened with a sinful past, and led on by all kinds of desires, who are always wanting to be taught, but are incapable of reaching a knowledge of the truth" (Hanson, 91). From here it would require but the shortest of imaginative leaps for Hutchinson, especially with the Bellingham controversy (see Colacurcio) just past, to cast her interrogators as the very hypocrites and false teachers of whom the Epistle to Timothy warns.

⁹Until recently, little work has been done on issues of female competition and failed sisterhood, though more than one critic has protested the influence of a reifying feminist romance (Helen Vendler, "Feminism and Literature" in *New York Review of Books*, 31 May 1990, 19). Nina Auerbach's *Communities of Women: An Idea in Fiction* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978) thus repays rereading not only for its inspiring descriptions of female communities in formation, but for its salient, often astringent, observations on their fragility and failure. Valerie Miner and Helen Longino's *Competition: A Feminist Taboo?* (New York: The Feminist Press, 1987) offers a multidisciplinary, though naïve, selection of essays on the subject, while Bonnie Thornton Dill, "Race, Class and Gender: Prospects for an All-Inclusive Sisterhood" in *Feminist Studies* 9 (Spring 1983): 131–50, and Elizabeth Spelman, *The Inessential Woman* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), have worked to complicate a homogeneous notion of sisterhood with the heterogeneities of race and class. The last year has seen the publication of two groundbreaking books that take on the matter of female competition in literature and culture: Helena Michie's *Sororophobia: Differences Among Women in Literature and Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), a study of differences between women in late nineteenth- and twentieth-century narrative, and Betsy Erkkila's *The Wicked Sisters: Women Poets, Literary History and Discord* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), an investigation of competition and difference among and between American poets. Both books take provocative positions on what they deem the ahistorical quality of recent feminist thought, singling out in particular the work of those French feminists for whom the mother-child bond is the foundation of female language. Thus, Michie moves "outside the family to look at figures excluded from the familial lexicon" (9), while Erkkila challenges the way that "recent feminist representations of women's literary history have tended to romanticize, maternalize, essentialize and eternalize women writers and the relationships among them in ways that have worked to reconstitute the very gender stereotypes and polarities that have been historically the ground of women's oppression" (3).

of Bradstreet in the image of Hutchinson as political revolutionary misses so decidedly, misses specifically a gritty realpolitik of vision that makes Bradstreet and Hutchinson not their culture's Rosa Luxemburg and Emma Goldman, but rather its Jane Addams and Lillian Wald. Bradstreet's feminism is most acute, in other words, not when it risks itself in revolutionary gesture, but when it offers experienced testimony as to how an atrophied system of governance can strip individuals of inner resources. Then a vision of dysfunctional female identity and of moribund female culture emerges—a vision of women chained together in arid cycles of symbiosis and narcissistic projection, of intrafamilial relationships made instrumental, oppositional, but most importantly: territorial. Bradstreet's prototypical "sister," scrapping with her double for elbow room, makes explicable Julia Kristeva's lyrical evocation of that female "deject" who infers rather than knows her own existence as ground gained:

Instead of sounding himself as to his "being," he does so concerning his place: "Where am I?" instead of "Who am I?" . . . the space that engrosses the deject, the excluded, is . . . essentially divisible, foldable, and catastrophic . . . the deject never stops demarcating his universe.¹⁰

In Hutchinson's Calvinist lexicon, the word corresponding to such abjection is "fallen": division and divisiveness are but symptoms of the rending of the sinner from God. Kristeva's depiction of the female deject is very close to descriptions of the fallen

¹⁰Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 8. Kristeva has come under fire for an essentialism that would naturalize what is otherwise held to be constructed. To apply such a criticism to the text here would be to say that she describes the "deject" in almost religious terms, imputing to her an ontological place in the order of things not subject to the play of naming powers that Foucault claimed determined such orders. But it seems to me that "essentialism" may be a misnomer for Kristeva's "lyricism"—though the two may in the end amount to the same thing. Kristeva, like many of the theorists who have seized our imaginations, compels at least in part through her language. Even as she advances literary observations that would have social application, or calls attention to the artificiality of power structures, she deploys a poetic language whose authority seems that of the implicated subject, immutably so. Theoretically, such a language is the only tongue in which the domination of signifier over signified is arrested. Renouncing the empirical function, the reflective task, an implicated and lyrical writing—such as practiced by Kristeva, Derrida, and Foucault himself—can act as a lightning rod to the electric and vagrant play of powers. Terry Eagleton gave us full warning of the implications of our theory when he wrote, in 1976, that "there may come a moment, nevertheless, that poetry has to be apologized for" (Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* [Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1976], 17). That moment, apparently, has come, but its coming is unwarranted. Poetry's domain—and the domain of that theory when it becomes poetic—is one where the speaker may be subject to the play of powers but believes otherwise, believes in the efficacy of voice. Then, to quote Foucault on Bataille, that voice "breaks down at the center of its space, exposing in his nakedness, in the inertia of ecstasy, a visible and insistent subject who had tried to keep language at arm's length, but who now finds himself thrown by it, exhausted, upon the sands of that which he can no longer say." (Michel Foucault, "A Preface to Transgression," in *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. and with an intro. by Donald F. Bouchard, trans. Sherry Simon [Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1977], 29–52). The poetic subject lives in the vacuum that desire and then power eventually fill. Call this essentialism if you like, but I prefer to call it poetry. Needing no apology, this language of the "insistent subject" registers the implicated and powerless state language remediates. Dickinson said, "I felt a palsy the lines relieved," but the model for the theorist-poet that I have in mind is Kierkegaard, who called his *Fear and Trembling* "dialectical lyric." See my *The Regenerate Lyric: Theology and Innovation in American Poetry* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1993) for detailed discussions of the relationship of poetry to theory.

Eve. (Kristeva gives to Eve's plight a gestalt and an ontological virtuality that it takes Bradstreet, if you will, to historicize.) Probing the social psychology of women so lacking in inner reserves they must deduce inner from outer, existence from visibility, Bradstreet's poems describe a female anonymity or vacancy, driven to cohere self-protectively—but also ostentatiously—around Amazonian heroines or heroic visions of the self. This heroine, this representative figure, standing not only above men but also above other women, vindicates the community of women to men, but does so by filling all available space, by making the world a stage upon which she acts alone. Female unity, forged in a representative figure not unrelated to the Visible Saint—an Elizabeth, a Hutchinson, a Bradstreet—becomes a bogus spectacle. Counterpoised, then, in Bradstreet's work with a self-conscious feminist vision—a teleology of the possible—is a view of divisiveness and competition—a sociology of the actual—that illuminates a new inwardness to Bradstreet's poetry as it describes the precise quality of that neediness whose invisible cure Hutchinson called, simply, "Christ."

If Bradstreet's portraits of female strife have not often been noticed, it is probably because they are fittingly exiled in places so obvious that we do not see them. Bradstreet opens one poem by personifying flesh and spirit as battling sisters, another by representing Old and New England as mother and grown daughter, another by introducing an author and her book as new mother and infant—and we are used to understanding these allegories as conventionalized, somewhat contrived devices for the treatment of worldliness and renunciation, colonial dependence on England, the mixed blessing of early publication. I want to show, however, that in poem after poem these conventions take on lives of their own. The figures we expect to remain allegorical conveniences materialize as fleshed combatants who fight with such virulence, who exist with such characterological exactitude, who defend life histories of such depth that they threaten not only Calvinist decorum but also the alleged utopian doctrine of the poems.

These figures dramatize a tougher Bradstreet than we are used to seeing. Interested not only in airing the truths the male hierarchy mutes, and bent not only on challenging the monopoly of visibility held by men, Bradstreet investigates how a female pursuit of presentability, of a vindicating image, can exacerbate intracomunal tension, securing for itself a platform that is no less speciously formal than the eminence enjoyed by a Visible Saint. Failing in any true sense to be representative, the public image thus secured is, to use Hutchinson's terms, sanctified but not justified: fraudulent.

The matter of form and the formal is more complex still. Bradstreet's poems may be said to fret over how the exceptional fame of some is significant only in relation to others' anonymity, over how this merely formal preeminence will compromise the grandeur of the poems' "gynocentric" heroine. I want to suggest as well that this critique of heroic female "carriage" (again to use a term of Hutchinson's) is augmented by a recurrent formal instability in the poems themselves. Their centers do

not hold our attention. We tend to forget what they are about, remembering rather the metaphors through which their imputed subjects are delivered. Specifically, the political battle of Old and New England blurs into the bickering of that mother and daughter who represent the mother country and her colony. The scholastic rehearsal of the war between Spirit and Flesh is eclipsed by the spectacle of two rivalrous siblings whose unseemly contest wrecks the performance. In poem after poem, allegorical female figures who at first seem merely contrivances violate the boundaries of the merely formal to claim an informing power, which must qualify all the glory finally accruing to the winner. (Colloquially: she owes them.)

The circulation of power and powerlessness, fame and voicelessness, that I have sketched out may seem to bear resemblance to current models of hegemony and subversion, which are based on the deconstructive theory of textual contradiction. My sketch may even suggest the existence of a "political unconscious" that Bradstreet's texts make manifest. But the resemblance cannot stand without drastic qualification. The critique in Bradstreet's poetics, as in Hutchinson's, is not only launched against a political status quo—a disequilibrating system—but against politics itself. Inasmuch as it is representative, deputizing some in the service of others, and, inasmuch as it is formal, making presentable and inevitably static that immaterial essence Hutchinson called grace, politics functions in these poems as a kind of false consciousness, or grandstanding, whose antitype is the Church of Rome and whose type is the Congregation of Visible Saints. The struggle for preeminence enacted on the frame of the poems indicts, as it reflects, a world fallen into politics. The very tension of powers whose competition structures Bradstreet's vision—and the simulacrum of a materialist dialectic these powers present—act in self-consuming fashion. Poetry and theology use form to dematerialize form, God's essence the vortex drawing politics in.

And if I use this word *essence* (twice, now) advisedly, it is because Hutchinson's "argument" was nothing if not essentialist, positing an authentic reality outside the play of powers, beneath the world of forms. In these terms, Hutchinson's defeat and banishment by the Puritan elders should be viewed less as a first, lost battle for female power than as a lost struggle for that Reformed powerlessness—that reliance on inner resource—whose acknowledgment would liberate women from the sterile visibility Bradstreet's poems reveal. For Hutchinson, a Reformed politics is a Reformed theology in spasm, with all its female members pushed to the extremities, stranded far from the heart where lies Christ's love. Heartless, Bradstreet's women suffer in extremis that despair the celebrity of a Hutchinson masks but does not, in masking, relieve.

The obvious place to begin is with the poem to Elizabeth ("In Honour of that High and Mighty Princess Queen Elizabeth of Happy Memory"), the flagship poem in any argument for Bradstreet as the poet of gynocracy. At first, it seems clear enough that,

for Bradstreet, Elizabeth is avatar of an alternative female model of governance. According to this view, Elizabeth's tempered understanding of power serves as a corrective to the long train of destructive English kings, and for this reason, "From all the kings on earth she won the prize" (31).

But the poem, overheated, should give pause. Note how the poet can hardly restrain her crowing over Elizabeth's most punitive and manlike vigor, over the spectacle of Elizabeth beating men at their own game, commanding "Ships more invincible than Spain's, her foe" (50). Elizabeth's power is showcased in a battery of verbs: "She wracked, she sacked, she sunk his Armado" (51). *Sunk* staggers out of *sacked*, and *sacked* echoes *wracked* with a force explosive and martial—until, at last, the poet collects herself. Then Elizabeth's military prowess is subordinated to her peace-making gifts: "The states united now her fame do sing. / She their protectrix was; they well do know / Unto our dread virago, what they owe" (55–57). Having established Elizabeth's supremacy over men, the poet presses Elizabeth into service as representative of her sex. Her successes shed glory on all women: "Nay masculines, you have thus taxed us long, / But she, though dead, will vindicate our wrong" (102–3).

Such is Elizabeth's luster. But observe her setting. For if Elizabeth glorifies womankind, correcting with her fame a history of female anonymity, her fame yet depends in troubling measure on that anonymity—her distinction gains definition only by contrast with the histories of other queens she has bettered. There is Semiramis: "More infamy than fame she did procure" (73). Of Dido, the poet laments, "A great Eliza, but compared with ours, / How vanisheth her glory, wealth, and powers" (84–85). As for Cleopatra: "Instead of glory, [she] proved her country's shame" (87). Trotted into the poem as Elizabeth's attendants, the queens parade by simply in order to enhance, to buff, Elizabeth's supernal gloss. The effect of such ceremonialization is to consign them to a defeat more ignominious than that suffered by male antagonists, who are dignified by being wracked and sunk. Stranded in the honorific, made merely formal, Elizabeth's precursor queens seem to disappear. Their disappearance is key to the dynamic that will structure numerous poems. The glory Elizabeth wins for her sex she also wins at the expense of her sex. Her representativeness depends, oddly enough, upon their very uncountability, her proud place is won through their placelessness. Even as the poem celebrates the advent of an ampler world for women, a world opened by Elizabeth, its own structure delineates a constricted economy of prestige whose law is ruthless scarcity. The same law governs Bradstreet's management of the poem. Just as Elizabeth is centerpieced in a world become "the theatre where she did act" (27), Bradstreet's celebration of Elizabeth depends upon the presence of the explicitly uncelebrated, who are driven to parts of the poem marked superfluous.

This triage reflects of course on Bradstreet's own vexed celebrity. She found her personal fame ("Tenth Muse") an embarrassment of riches. Bradstreet was introduced

to readers with a letter from John Woodbridge, marveling, "is this woman's work," followed by a poem (signed "N. Ward") that sealed her exceptionalism with backhanded praise: "It half revives my chill frost-bitten blood, / To see a woman once do ought that's good" (14–15). But she put what might have festered as guilt to analytic use. Teasing out the meretriciousness of the center, Bradstreet made a case against the tokenism that protected her. Exempt from, rather than transgressor of, the rule limiting her sex, the token became in effect booster for a dubious celebrity that only cloaked the lives of those that she would champion.

The same dynamic—where a unified presentability is attained at the cost of deeper intracommunal fracture—governs the twinned sections of Bradstreet's *Quaternion*, titled "The Four Elements" and "Of the Four Humours." Structured as the comically acrimonious debates of sisters and cousins respectively, each poem betrays signs of female feuding that are at extreme variance with the vision of unity toward which the poem appears to build.

"The Four Elements" introduces a quartet of sisters who "did contest / Which was the strongest, noblest, and the best" (4), while in "The Four Humours," four cousins (daughters of the aforesaid elements) take up their mothers' vendettas. Unlike the poem to Elizabeth, where Semiramis and Cleopatra are essentially poetic statistics—there to swell Elizabeth's reputation with a maximum of verbal economy—in the *Quaternion*, the female functionaries make a lot of noise. So much noise, in fact, that the poem's apparent project—a well-mannered skate through four compulsory Renaissance loops—begins to seem pro forma, as the sisters themselves attract more and more attention, their pyrotechnics becoming ultimately more interesting than the matter their emotionalism is supposed to figure. The anything-DuBartas-does-I-can-do-better impetus to the poem cannot in the end compel the same fascination as that exacted by the sisters, who play for much higher stakes. As if soundproofed in their allegorical function, these sisters shamelessly, viciously brawl, using the high voltage tactics of siblings, with nary a drop of tenderness to spare.

Here, for example, is a bit of Water's idiom; her target is her sister Earth:

*Sister (quoth she) it had full well behoved
Among your boastings to have praised me,
Cause of your fruitfulness, as you shall see:
This your neglect shows your ingratitude
And how your subtlety would men delude.
Not one of us (all knows) that's like to thee
Ever in craving from the other three. (267–73)*

What we are accustomed to call the metaphoric tenor—that literal subject a figurative vehicle makes dramatic—has little potency in this context. The poem, we must

remind ourselves, is supposed to be about Earth's dependence on Water: terrestrial fecundity comes from Water, not from the mere dirt whose vainglorious blossoming is none of her own doing. But this ecological truism is eclipsed by the familial grudge of the allegorical sisters who act it out. Beyond calling her sister's every virtue purloined, and beyond rating her sibling's integrity as a sister and her comportment in the world, Water's secret weapon is the one beloved by all siblings for whom relationship is finally a turf war—three sisters ganging up on one reduces the poem's science to mere detail.

Similarly, in "The Four Humours," there is an unfocusing of the simple, four-square diagram that the allegory would draw, as squabbling cousins assume personalities that four humors seem inadequate to govern. Take Sanguinity, for instance, responding to cousin Choler's broadside. If Water's time-honored strategy was divide and conquer, Sanguinity's tack is the far more subtle one of seizing the moral high ground. Drawing herself up, Blood preaches: "To pay with railings is not mine intent, / But to evince the truth by argument" (171–72). As she concludes,

*No braggs I've used, to you I dare appeal,
If modesty my worth do not conceal.
I've used no bitterness, nor taxed your name,
As I to you, to me do ye the same. (350–53)*

Feigning thin-skinned distress that a cousin should so descend to the ad hominem, Blood vanquishes her opponent without even soiling her gloves. In both poems, the women's subtleties are cruel, and the subtlety flows from the wrong quarter: not from the alleged characteristics of blood versus phlegm, water versus earth, but from the more readily recognizable repertoire of familial cruelties. The women's volleys hit their marks with the exactitude of psychological intimacy rather than the exactitude of Renaissance taxonomy, and as a result there is a kind of slippage, an inversion of tenor and vehicle. While the women were presumably invented as paper-doll personifications for a war of elements and humors, it is the elements and humors, not the women, that come to seem like cutouts: Water, Choler, Earth, and Sanguinity seem allegorical vehicles, contrived to dramatize the dynamics of intrafamilial warfare. The slippage is additionally manifest in the temporality of the passages. Allegorical figures are typically time neutral, projected out of a more turbulent temporal world in order to stabilize it, to temper flux with the eternal rule of law. Here allegorical stability gives way to the deep time of vendettas and grudges, stored up vengeance, long-repressed words—of that unforgettable and constantly infringing past that characterizes the lived time of the family.

How to explain, then, why "The Four Humours" should end with the cousins cooing harmoniously? One might deduce, as, for instance, Wendy Martin does, a

female amity particularly skilled in the negotiation of difference.¹¹ But such a view depends, one must grant, upon a negotiator as skilled as the opponents are ferocious, and this condition does not obtain. The rapprochement of the last lines is secured by Phlegm (Patience), who is introduced by a cousin who mocks her doltishness in advance: "We shall expect much sound, but little force" (489–90). It follows that were this Phlegm to offer concord, she would need to prove her cousin's slur unwarranted; she would need to have something new up her sleeve. What she has, on the other hand, is even more milquetoast than what her cousin predicts:

*Let's now be friends; it's time our spite were spent,
Lest we too late this rashness do repent,
Such premises will force a sad conclusion,
Unless we agree, all falls into confusion.* (596–99)

Phlegm's adjurations aim at an epigrammatic punch—"It's time our spite were spent"—but they fall flat; her diction has the overeager sententiousness of the Pollyanna. The last line of the stanza is no more than turgid, arrhythmic prose. Worse, the line that frames Phlegm's speech, on whose closure the unity of the women rests, is similarly insipid: "This loving counsel pleased them all so well / That Phlegm was judged for kindness to excel" (610–11).

That six pages of the bitterest vituperation should be mended by Phlegm's pieties seems unbelievable, the close no more ingenuous than a public smile. Exactly. Patience's governance, it turns out, is not unlike the governance of Elizabeth, who made the world her stage, whose Fame erodes the line between representativeness and publicity, revolutionary politics and good policy. Like the temperate Elizabeth, Patience forges or, better, forces unity by invoking appearances. The key lines are these: "Nor jars nor scoffs, let none hereafter see, / But all admire our perfect amity" (606–7). The line implies that to admire amity is not to see—indeed, that amity depends upon the stylized concealment it is the task of Patience to administer. The harmonious politics of the close testifies less to an intrinsic female gentleness and love of concord than to a patience politic in the public eye.¹²

This politics of visibility is the buried subject of what proves Bradstreet's most radical poem of Puritan duplicity. Here, Hutchinson's own conviction as to the corrupting powers of a justification inferred from the visible yields a regenerate sibling, a sister whose moral vanity delivers her treatment of an "unregenerate part"

¹¹Wendy Martin, *An American Triptych* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984).

¹²See also Mitchell Breitwieser's *Cotton Mather and Benjamin Franklin: The Price of Representative Personality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), which studies the stresses on representativeness, as the model of the Visible Saint evolves into that of ambassador.

to the realm of pathology. In "The Flesh and the Spirit," the center of the poem images the standard Puritan triumph of Spirit over Flesh, while on the frame a troubling picture of Visible Sainthood appears. As in the *Quaternion*, "The Flesh and the Spirit" casts Flesh and Spirit as a pair of debating sisters, allegorical mouthpieces for the orthodox face-off. But also like the sisters of the *Quaternion*, Flesh and Spirit emerge from the opening lines of the poem as characters of unsettling verisimilitude. Their exact and sharply differentiated personalities sabotage the poem's orthodox morality.

First of all, it is hard not to notice how modestly likeable is Flesh. She may well represent license and sin, yet her tone is temperate, her diction economical, even chaste. Proffering "silver, pearls, and gold" (32), she seems, well, generous. Her language has a modestly aphoristic persuasiveness. Querying, "Can speculation satisfy / Notion without reality?" (14–15), Flesh refrains from overselling or overstating her case, and she is scrupulous not to attack her opponent. While we might expect of Flesh a superficial attractiveness, her moderation disarms; Spirit's marked lack of such, by contrast, appalls. From Spirit's opening words, her tone is sharply peremptory. Even allowing for the ethos of the jeremiad, for a culture accustomed to girding the right in martial rhetoric, Spirit's tone is ugly. Not just impatient of truckling, she is gratuitously mean-spirited, barking out her reply to Flesh in the clenched tones of rage bitten back: "Be still thou unregenerate part" (38), "And combat with thee will and must, / Until I see thee laid in th' dust" (42–43). Even when we rationalize this rage as spiritual exhaustion, faith tested to its limits, it is hard not to notice how convincingly Spirit plays the wicked stepsister. She spills, for example, the secret of her sibling's tainted origins with the smugly gleeful relish of the birth child: "For from one father are we not, / Thou by old Adam wast begot, / But my arise is from above, / Whence my dear Father I do love" (46–49). She crows: "My greatest honour it shall be / When I am victor over thee" (62–63).

Thus, even though, technically speaking, Spirit wins her debate with Flesh, having the last word—not to mention the whole last two-thirds of the poem and the "laurels" she proudly vaunts while her sister is led off, captive—her prideful and uncharitable carriage cannot but suggest a dangerous hubris disruptive of human relationship. One is reminded of that moment in Wigglesworth's "Day of Doom" when husband abandons wife and wife, husband, and no amount of Wigglesworth's pontificating can allay our uneasiness at a Providence so indifferent to human bonds. Spirit's characterization excavates just this ruthlessness of sainthood, debunking a public ideal whose model of redemption depends upon rivalry, a Puritanism so divisively constituted, it is every soul for herself, and the devil take the insufficiently self-interested.

In addition, however, to suggesting how Visible Sainthood can create monsters of pride who scorn communal, and particularly familial, relations, the poem also registers the intrapsychic anguish produced by an ideal that pits self against self. Spirit

and Flesh are, of course, two halves of one self that has absorbed the complex dualism of Puritan doctrine as a crude, almost Manichean schizophrenia. Indeed, there is a Gothic element to the relationship of the sisters. Spirit becomes torturer of the sibling who is herself; and the psyche becomes a torture chamber, in which virtue is a pitiless and inquisitorial tyrant whose public demeanor chafes private vice raw. "One need not," as Dickinson would later put it, "be a Chamber—to be Haunted." The fact that the dialogue occurs in Secret Place, a place of unseen tears, points to the repression of division that we have seen elsewhere. Behind the individual triumph of Spirit, whose garment is Visible Sainthood, is a concealed history of divisive contests. The self that emerges from such contests is torn at best; at worst, it is insufferable, a mountebank.

I propose, in short, that by casting Spirit and Flesh as feuding sisters, Bradstreet transposes Hutchinson's doubts about a Puritan justification that is inferred from externals into her own poetic project of female defense. That the sister accorded pride-of-place so ambiguously merits it, and that (like Elizabeth, Patience, and the Tenth Muse herself) her fame is wrested from another's infamy, are the constraints on female hagiography that Bradstreet applies in "The Flesh and the Spirit."

By the time, then, that we turn to "A Dialogue between Old England and New" and "The Author to Her Book," we no longer read Bradstreet's framing devices as casual. Her repetition of the same devices in the same places—on the edges of poems—points not to any failure of technical ingenuity, but rather to the determinative structure of a social pathology whose informing power Bradstreet suggests in the recursive form of the poem itself. Equally as horrific as the relationships of sisters (described above) are those of mothers and children in "A Dialogue between Old England and New" and "The Author to Her Book." These poems sketch out a slightly different, because now intergenerational, dynamic of female relationship. If, to schematize for a moment, in the poems about sisters there was not enough *space*, in the poems about mothers and daughters there is not enough *time*. The Self is thus preserved by a steady, unremitting occupation of the Other's time—through guilt—or by living *in* the Other—through symbiosis. Whereas the poems of sisterhood sketched out a tussle of visibility and invisibility, in these poems the internalization of visibility as a public value has the result, first humorously, then grotesquely, of making character theatrical. Not only are the boundaries of Self and Other insecure, but the internal and external Self blur as well in stylization. Mother and children suffer an intergenerational envy so disabling that the Self is defined through the performance of a repetitive and stylized synecdoche, or else through the vicarious manipulation of the Other as stiffly directed proxy for the Self.

First: "A Dialogue between Old England and New." This poem—easily dismissed as Bradstreet's creaky history lesson in the woes of Cromwellian England, besieged by "Rome's whore"—has been enjoying a recent rehabilitation in feminist readings. The model of mother/daughter or, more generally, female cooperation

presented in the poem is taken to redeem its datedness. As both Watt and Martin argue, mother and daughter put their heads together to lament a political situation whose squalor and bloodiness they are powerless to control.¹³ As a nearly scriptural lamentation, the poem, in this view, shows the impact of war on women who, shut out of decision making, can only bear its brunt.

The poem, however, records a good deal more than passive female suffering, and more too than women's chthonic wisdom as to war's venality. The public powerlessness of mother and daughter in the poem drives their pugnacity underground, where powerlessness and helplessness can ossify into passive-aggressive roles. Relationship becomes battleground; and personal loyalty, an issue that cuts closer to home than intergenerational agreement or disagreement over the dispensation of colonial affairs. New England, allegorical daughter to Old England, begins the poem cheerfully enough. Bidding her mother, bent by troubles, to "Tell thy daughter, she may sympathize," the daughter inclines a solicitous ear, but her cheer is wasted. Enter Mother England, a geriatric caricature, spilling a litany of complaints: "Art ignorant indeed of these my woes? / Or must my forced tongue these griefs disclose?" (14–15). The truth is, Old England hardly takes forcing. Losing no opportunity to reprove her daughter's neglect, she sermonizes:

*And thou a child, a limb, and dost not feel
My fainting weak'ned body now to reel?
This physic purging potion I have taken
Will bring consumption or an ague quaking,
Unless some cordial thou fetch from high,
Which present help may ease my malady.
If I decease, doth think thou shalt survive?
Or by my wasting state dost think to thrive?
Then weigh our case, if't be not justly sad;
Let me lament alone, while thou art glad. (18–27)*

So prolix and long-suffering a character is Old England, so much the stereotype of the neglected mother, that again we forget the claim it is her allegorical function to communicate: that the colony should not forget its debt to and need of the mother country. This dependence of the new on the old, of the reality of New England's political dependence on Old England, is subverted. It is the mother who is the dependent party. Geriatric frustration, with its peevish and illogically directed rage, could not be more subtly rendered. The endless iterations of the mother are the script

¹³Emily Stipes Watt, *The Poetry of American Women from 1632 to 1945* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1977).

of a woman who lives to take up her daughter's time, who fills her own life's time by occupying that of another.

Moreover, the defensive withdrawal into platitude of this daughter—who has shut down in order to manage her rage—is drawn with equal delicacy. The daughter may console, "Your humble child entreats you, show your grief, / Though arms, not purse she hath for your relief" (59–60); but since no amount of attention will appease a mother whose rancor has become so ritualized, so stylized, this filial benevolence is a strategy for distance. Bradstreet's portrait of this mother and daughter precisely captures the disaffected ennui and curious claustrophobia of mother-daughter estrangement. When, for what seems the tenth time, the mother appeals to her daughter's guilt—"If any pity in thy heart remain, / Or any childlike love thou dost retain, / For my relief, do what there lies in thee, / And recompense that good I've done to thee" (209–12)—one realizes that she hopes for no real comfort, that discomfiture is what she lives by. Her identity survives as a reflex of martyred mien, just as her daughter lives out the relationship by intoning the script of good daughter. Parodic echoes of themselves, both mother and daughter sacrifice identity to a ritual performance of blocked roles.

Finally, the most chilling example I will adduce comes from Bradstreet's most famous poem, "The Author to Her Book." The poem is distractingly explicable and clever, and yet the reciprocity of tenor and vehicle on which its conceit depends imagines horrors far greater than that of premature publication. While the conceit does indeed dramatize the way in which the work of art, born of hard labor, is never perfect enough, it also offers a gripping view of a symbiotic mother-child relationship whose neurotic mechanism it apparently takes for granted. In order, in other words, to communicate an agony the poet assumes we have not suffered—the agony of revision—she produces a familiar agony she feels safe in assuming: a mother's vampirish identification with the child who represents her. Bradstreet's maternal author "washed thy face, but more defects I saw, / And rubbing off a spot still made a flaw. / I stretched thy joints to make thee even feet, / Yet still thou run'st more hobbling than is meet" (14–17). Even as the poem wittily chronicles the frustrations of composition, it suggests the mutilating efforts of a mother who treats her child as an unfinished work of art. Never perfect enough, eternally, grotesquely subject to correction and recorection, the child is projection of her mother's attenuated sense of self. The child star becomes the most tortured, poignant instance of the pitfalls of female visibility that Bradstreet treats in her career.

One last time we should do a double take: which is tenor and which vehicle, which the unfamiliar experience—here, revision—that the poem's metaphor would enliven? This is hardly the first time that Bradstreet's metaphoric strategy has been to make female dysfunctionality the commonplace or given, from which we extrapolate truths farther from home. This use of metaphor invites two readings. First, and more obviously, it suggests the palpable and epidemic female unhappiness out of which

Hutchinson's ministry sprang, revealing a colonial female ethos not nearly so revolutionary as a late, wishful revisionism would project. But second, we should note how Bradstreet's linguistic device makes acknowledgment of an abject misery precondition for understanding of a public state—understanding of the metaphoric vehicle preconditions understanding of the tenor. The representativeness of a Bradstreet, skilled at performance; or an Elizabeth, at conquest; or a Hutchinson, at polemic, is a compromise with visibility more apt to produce monsters than saints.¹⁴ For Bradstreet, as for Hutchinson, the emergence of a female subversive voice is less an indication of political maturity than of spiritual crisis.

After one has forgotten the theological niceties that govern Spirit's replies to Flesh, her smug gloating over a sister's blotched lineage lingers. Well after we have forgotten the policy details of "A Dialogue between Old England and New," we recall the petulance of Old England and New England's studied remoteness. And long after one has concluded that Anne Bradstreet protests too much over the flaws of her book, we are nagged by the vision of a mother anxiously daubing at her daughter's face, tying and retying her shoes. In her best known yet least understood poems, Anne Bradstreet explores how much longed-for states of female visibility and female unity—political fame, cosmological balance, Visible Sainthood, colonial cooperation, and poetic distinction—are achieved by women against a backdrop of dissolution, scarcity, and a ravenously territorial struggle for survival as oneself. Even as the poems project hopeful visions of female community, they reveal how fame compromises community, and how its achievement means betrayal of community. The utopian dream of a gynocentric world comes to seem but an escapist dead end, returning women to conditions of dire dissatisfaction. By situating or framing the utopian impulse within conditions of female dysfunction, Bradstreet reveals the internecine cruelties that too cosmetic a vision of female representativeness can wreak. She concurs, in her verse, with Hutchinson's complex critique of Sainthood. A culture of visibility—overconfident in the capacity of the political to govern the spiritual—capitulates to Paul, turning its weakest members against each other, and so sacrificing spirit's mysterious solaces for pantomimes of discipline, dumb shows the eye can see.

¹⁴An intriguing parallel in contemporary fiction emerges in Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (New York: New American Library, 1987). There, Baby Suggs, maternal healer and uncertified minister, whose love-thyself gospel radicalizes Hutchinson's of the indwelling spirit, is censured and finally shunned by her community. Morrison's unexpected dethroning of Baby Suggs should be understood to exert pressure on any reader discomfited by Hester Prynne's failure to emerge a fully justified prophetess of passion. In both cases, the reader is initially enlisted in the company of passion, only to learn in the course of the novel of passion's antisocial, and particularly internecine, costs. Morrison, like Hawthorne, builds an essentially conservative case within an ostensibly radical frame. Reviling the powers that drive women to radical separatism, both censure the pride of this separatism with equal severity, judging it to lead finally to schism within the community and a species of autism in the psyche. Hester's mind, unventilated by social intercourse, travels in narrower and narrower circles, while Baby Suggs ends up in bed by "studying on colors" one at a time.