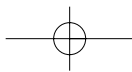
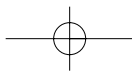
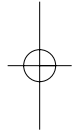
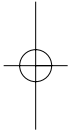


# ANNE BRADSTREET





# ANNE BRADSTREET

*A Guided Tour of the Life and  
Thought of a Puritan Poet*

HEIDI L. NICHOLS



P U B L I S H I N G

P.O. BOX 817 • PHILLIPSBURG • NEW JERSEY 08865-0817

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Title page of 1678 edition of *The Tenth Muse* courtesy of the Rare Book Division of the Library of Congress.

*Page design by Lakeside Design Plus*  
*Typesetting by Dawn Premako*

Printed in the United States of America

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Nichols, Heidi L., 1970–

Anne Bradstreet : a guided tour of the life and thought of a Puritan poet / Heidi L. Nichols.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references (p. ) and index.

ISBN-13: 978-0-87552-610-2 (pbk.)

ISBN-10: 0-87552-610-1 (pbk.)

1. Bradstreet, Anne, 1612?-1672. 2. Women and literature—New England—History—17th century. 3. Poets, American—Colonial period, ca. 1600-1775—Biography. 4. New England—Intellectual life—17th century. 5. Puritan women—New England—Biography. 6. Puritans—New England—Biography. I. Title.

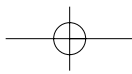
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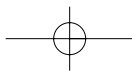
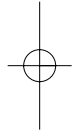
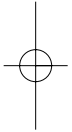
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For My Loving Parents,  
Keith and Beverly Haselhorst





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## CONTENTS

List of Illustrations	9
Acknowledgments	11
Introduction: Why Read Anne Bradstreet?	13

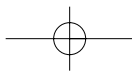
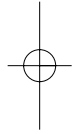
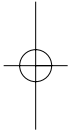
### **Part 1: Bradstreet and Her Work**

1. Pilgrim Poet: The Life of Anne Bradstreet	19
2. The Tenth Muse: Reading Anne Bradstreet	45

### **Part 2: Selected Works of Anne Bradstreet**

3. Apprentice	65
4. Bard	81
5. Lover	117
6. Sufferer	141
7. Sage	153
8. Pilgrim	181

Bibliography	199
About the Illustrations	203
Index of Persons	207
Index of Bradstreet's Works	209

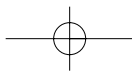
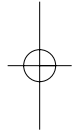
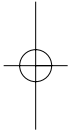




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## ILLUSTRATIONS

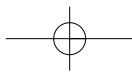
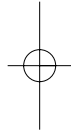
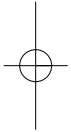
- 1.1 Portrait of James I 20
- 1.2 Portrait of John Cotton 24
- 1.3 Portrait of Charles I 26
- 1.4 Early map of Boston Harbor 28
- 1.5 Arrival of the *Arbella* and company in Boston Harbor 29
- 1.6 Portrait of John Winthrop 30
- 1.7 Initial word of Massachusetts Bay Colony charter 33
- 1.8 Anne Hutchinson preaching 34
- 1.9 Title page of 1650 edition of *The Tenth Muse* 38
- 1.10 Title page of 1678 of *Several Poems* 40
- 2.1 Portrait of Sir Walter Raleigh 47
- 2.2 Title page of *Bay Psalm Book* 52
- 2.3 Title page of *The Day of Doom* 54
- 2.4 Title page of *The Simple Cobbler* 57
- 3.1 Timeline 78
- 4.1 Elizabeth I signature 94
- 5.1 Portrait of Simon Bradstreet 120
- 5.2 Stained glass window in St. Botolph's Church 130
- 6.1 Andover house 143
- 7.1 Handwritten letter to Bradstreet's son Simon 156
- 8.1 Bradstreet's signature 197



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The support of others has enabled me to find the time, energy, and materials necessary to introduce and edit the work of Anne Bradstreet. I offer thanks to the faculty concerns committee at Lancaster Bible College for its support of the project and to the librarians at Lancaster Bible College for interlibrary loan materials. Thanks also go to Charles Hambrick-Stowe for his kind consultation on the initial concept. With two young children of my own—far fewer than Bradstreet’s eight, but busy nonetheless—I thank my dear and loving husband, Steve, for making time for me to complete this volume and for offering insightful suggestions throughout. And, I thank my parents, Keith and Beverly Haselhorst, for their never-ending encouragement of me and my studies—and for letting me leave the light on at night to enjoy just one more chapter. It is to them that I dedicate this volume.



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## INTRODUCTION: WHY READ ANNE BRADSTREET?

She labored poetically on the edge of a wilderness, a vast landscape filled with menacing animals, sometimes hostile Native Americans, and the searing heat and plummeting cold of a harsh New England climate. She resided in a community centered on and governed by religious beliefs. She survived in a time when disease and sickness took a much greater toll than they do today. Perhaps it seems quaint, perhaps spiritual and even intellectual, to read the work of this Puritan woman who wrote nearly four hundred years ago. But with such differences in experience and context, what could she possibly have to say to us?

We can answer this question with typical arguments for reading bygone writers. A study of Anne Bradstreet and her work helps to flesh out the historical record. As a settler in the Massachusetts Bay Colony and as the daughter and wife of two of the colony's early governors, Bradstreet offers insights into the makings and birth pains of this young Puritan colony, as well as into its embattled mother country. Bradstreet's life and work, revealing her vibrant intellectualism and her outspoken love for her husband, challenge stereotypes many still have of the Puritans. And, as an orthodox Puritan, Bradstreet adds another dimension to the study of women in church history, for she differs from the

## INTRODUCTION

more commonly considered mystical figures of Teresa of Avila and Margery Kempe.

Of course, Bradstreet also deserves reading for literary reasons. She is worthy of exploration simply due to her title as the first published American poet. Once drawn to Bradstreet by such a distinction, the reader is sure to continue to explore both her more formal poetry and her personal lyrics, rich in intellectual and aesthetic rigor and worthy of emulation by the aspiring writer.

Certainly these are admirable, if expected, reasons to read Anne Bradstreet. We must ask, however, what she can truly say to us in light of our vastly different cultural, societal, and religious contexts. Herein lies an irony—perhaps what makes her different from us is exactly what makes a reading of her work so integral. Perhaps it is exactly our contextual differences and the effects they have on our perceptions of life and the afterlife that should propel us to read her work. Whether we recognize it or not, this voice resounding from another era faced the same ultimate realities we face today—the realities of a God-centered universe.

Bradstreet's culture, her surroundings, and her tradition, coupled with her spiritual and intellectual mettle, brought many of these pivotal truths to the forefront, truths that we tend to overlook on a daily basis. A colonist who was regularly confronted with impending death and the afterlife, she was constantly reminded of her mortality, for example, and lived in light of it. Our mortality may be masked by the niceties of modern living and medical advances, but it is still there, lurking beneath a seemingly solid but thin veneer and relentless in its ultimate grip. In contrast to the common delusion that we control our lives in today's society, we can gain in Bradstreet the perspective of one who recognized God's sovereign hand in every aspect of her life, in times of exuberance and in times of pain. And, through reading Brad-

## INTRODUCTION

street we can share the vision of a woman who possessed a sharp awareness of the holistic ways in which the doctrines of grace can and should permeate day-to-day living.

In spite of our seeming contextual differences, perhaps Bradstreet's perspective can remind us of what we *do* have in common. Why wouldn't we want to read Anne Bradstreet, or anyone else for that matter, who reminds us that in spite of our twenty-first-century context, we face the same realities of life—of mortality, of redemption, and of the role of grace? Perhaps Bradstreet's probing and self-reflection in light of these, a characteristically Puritan discipline, will inspire us toward the same, whether through literature or otherwise.

In order to assist the reader in exploring the work of this remarkable writer, this volume offers introductory chapters providing an overview of Bradstreet's life, spiritual and literary contexts, and critical reception. These chapters include a synopsis of Bradstreet's Puritan and British Renaissance roots, a discussion of the recurring themes and devices that emerge in her poems and prose, and a brief look at her reception among critics. A reader of poetry and prose follows, offering brief introductions to larger groupings of Bradstreet's work, as well as to individual poems and prose pieces, and providing footnotes to explain allusions and archaic words.

Most collections of Bradstreet present her works in chronological order. This volume groups the poetry strictly thematically with the hope that each section will reveal a different aspect of this multi-faceted woman. John Harvard Ellis's 1867 edition of Bradstreet's work (reprinted in 1932 and 1962) serves as the source for the poetry and prose. Ellis's edition, which was the first to print the contents of the Andover Manuscript book, contains what is essentially an edited reprint of the second edition of Bradstreet's poetry published by John Foster in 1678 in Boston. Most

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INTRODUCTION

scholars consider the 1678 edition to better reflect Bradstreet's intentions than the 1650 first edition published without her knowledge. Although the typography and use of apostrophes presented in Ellis's edition have been updated, this volume otherwise follows the original punctuation, capitalization, and spelling of Ellis.

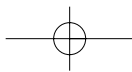
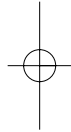
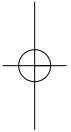
It is my hope that this volume will provide windows to the soul of Bradstreet. She merits the attention not only because she is such an intriguing historical figure and skilled poet, but also because she reminds us of the aesthetic and spiritual stimulation even centuries-old literature can provide to those willing to take the time to plumb it.

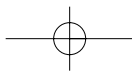
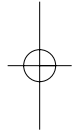
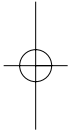


# PART 1

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## BRADSTREET AND HER WORK





1

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PILGRIM POET: THE LIFE OF  
ANNE BRADSTREET

**J**ust three years before her death, Anne Bradstreet penned verses whose tired couplets describe a longing for eternity and escape from the cares of this world. Comparing herself to a “weary pilgrim” who has experienced such hardships as “burning sun,” “stormy rains,” “bryars and thornes,” “hungry wolves,” and “rugged stones,” she voices her desire to complete her spiritually and physically taxing pilgrimage:

A pilgrim I, on earth, perplex  
with sinns with cares and sorrows vex  
By age and paines brought to decay  
and my Clay house mouldring away

She longs for the resurrection and eternity spent with Christ, for release from her physical limitations and sufferings, and for freedom from separation and loss:

Oh how I long to be at rest  
and soare on high among the blest.  
This body shall in silence sleep

---

BRADSTREET AND HER WORK

Mine eyes no more shall ever weep  
No fainting fits shall me assaile  
nor grinding paines my body fraile  
With cares and fears ne'r cumbred be  
Nor losses know, nor sorrowes see

No doubt, Bradstreet had good reason to be weary. She had survived the ravages of smallpox and had throughout her life endured numerous illnesses. She had experienced



*James I*

KING JAMES I.

1.1 Portrait and autograph of James I, whose reign began nine years before Bradstreet's birth.

## PILGRIM POET

Old England at a time of brewing hostility toward the non-conformist Puritans under James I, Charles I, and the infamous Archbishop Laud. She had survived a potentially treacherous voyage to the New World and had borne up under the same harsh conditions in the Massachusetts Bay Colony that had snuffed out the lives of many of her fellow settlers. She had possessed for decades a firsthand view of the political and religious turmoil of a young colony experiencing growing pains that often embroiled her husband and father in conflict. And, later in life, she had experienced her own personal tragedies, including the burning of her house and the deaths of numerous family members.

Of course, this is not to mention that during these many hardships, Bradstreet had reared eight children. And she had negotiated the precarious role of a woman writer, becoming the first published American poet. To be sure, Bradstreet had lived an eventful life—certainly privileged in many ways, but likewise full of testing—and for this, she had good reason to relish eternal rest.

**Life in Old England**

Fifty-seven years earlier in 1612, she had been born Anne Dudley to Dorothy and Thomas Dudley in Northampton, England. Since no baptismal record survives, she documents for us her approximate birth date in a 1632 poem in which she describes herself as “Twice ten years old.”

We know relatively little of Bradstreet’s mother, Dorothy Dudley. Cotton Mather describes her in his *Magnalia Christi Americana* as “a Gentlewoman whose Extract and Estate were Considerable.” Bradstreet herself extols her mother’s numerous virtues, calling her a “Worthy Matron of unspotted life,” “loving Mother and obedient wife,” and “true Instructor of her Family.” Apparently a woman who de-

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**BRADSTREET AND HER WORK**

manded much of others and gave liberally in exchange, she pitied and gave to the poor and was “To servants wisely awful, but yet kind.”

Bradstreet’s father, Thomas Dudley, never attended university, though he apparently received a rigorous education at a free school in Northampton. Consistently recognized for his intellectual mettle and devotion to reading, he is described as a “devourer of books” by Cotton Mather and as a “Magazine of History” by Anne.

Orphaned at the age of ten after his father fell in battle as a soldier for Queen Elizabeth, the young Dudley grew to attain numerous positions of stature even in his youth. He served first as a page, then as a law clerk to Judge Nicolls in Northamptonshire, next as a captain under Queen Elizabeth in a war supporting the Protestant King Henry IV of France against Spanish forces, and again as a clerk for Nicolls, where Anne would have spent her first years.

Dudley rose to even greater prominence in 1619 when he was summoned to serve as steward of the affairs of Theophilus, Earl of Lincoln. The young earl, having recently inherited a debt-ridden estate from his father, looked to Dudley to bring order and prosperity to his affairs. This is just what Dudley did, and he was to continue in the earl’s service until 1630, with a break of just a few short months.

**Sitting Loose from God**

Just seven when her father brought his young family to the earl’s estate, which was comprised of Tattershall Castle and Sempringham Manor in County Lincolnshire, Anne found herself catapulted into a culturally and intellectually stimulating atmosphere. Living in the latter stages of the British Renaissance and the flowering of culture begun un-